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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

BY

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PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to trace the development of Marlowe's mind and art as these are revealed in the surviving parts of his work and to portray the personality thus perceived. It was begun in America some years ago, when the sympathy and advice of Professor C. F. Tucker Brooke went far to help its progress. Since then it has owed much to friends and scholars in Europe, to Professor Caroline Spurgeon and Miss M. St. Clare Byrne for their reading of the completed manuscript, to Mr. Hugh Macdonald for help in checking the quotations from Marlowe's works, and to the officials of the British Museum Library for their unfailing courtesy and help. Beyond this is a debt to the friend who discussed the book chapter by chapter as it was written, a debt as difficult to define as it is fully to acknowledge.

The text of the Oxford edition of Marlowe's works (1910) is followed, except in a few quotations where the reading of another early edition is used in preference to that of the original edition.

UNA ELLIS-FERMOR

ST. JOHN'S WOOD

December 1926

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AS College

Kashmir

Quapropter bene cum superis de rebus habenda
nobis est ratio, solis lunæque meatus
qua fiant ratione, et qua vi quæque gerantur
in terris, tum cum primis ratione sagaci
unde anima atque animi constet natura videndum ;
et quæ res nobis vigilantibus obvia mentes
terrificet morbo adfectis somnoque sepultis,
cernere uti videamur eos audireque coram,
morte obita quorum tellus amplectitur ossa.

LUCRETIUS—*De Rerum Natura* I, 127-35

INTRODUCTION

THE peculiar difficulties which beset Marlowe's biographers are inherent in the subject, for little is known of his life and some of his most important works are incomplete or survive only in corrupt texts ; but the task of gathering together indications and of interpreting from them the nature of the mind and character of the man whom they reveal, promises a reward before which the difficulties are insignificant. It is a task which still remains to be accomplished and which can only be achieved by a long succession of readers drawn by the profound value of his thought and the beauty of his poetry, to give to his work consideration more patient than most of his contemporaries demand.

For Marlowe, in spite of the imperfect expression of some of his ideas, has actually left us in no doubt as to the clearness of his ultimate vision. To some he apparently makes no appeal, while Shakespeare appeals to all. Yet, in reality, Marlowe speaks of things no less profound and no less universal than Shakespeare. Wherever men are preoccupied with the 'why?' rather than the 'how?' in whatever periods of history thought turns back to question the nature of man's being and the part he plays in the universe, there the thought of Marlowe will be found to be at the heart of man's most vital experience. Wherever fundamental instincts and intuitions have been overlaid by convention, superstition or hypocrisy, until it becomes necessary to question again the purpose of life in order that life may again be sane, there Marlowe's trenchant and fearless mind will be found warning men "not to be afraid of bugbeares." He is the Lucretius of the English language, and though he does not accompany men closely in their

daily lives, as does Shakespeare, his poetry and his aspiration will be heard in times of doubt and confusion, of disillusionment and corruption, when more familiar and better-loved voices are silent.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

CHAPTER I

LIFE

Icare est chut ici, le jeune audacieux,
Qui pour voler au ciel eut assez de courage :
Ici tomba son corps dégarni de plumage,
Laissant tous braves cœurs de sa chute envieux.

O bienheureux travail d'un esprit glorieux,
Qui tire un si grand gain d'un si petit dommage !
O bienheureux malheur plein de tant d'avantage,
Qu'il rende le vaincu des ans victorieux !

Un chemin si nouveau n'étonna sa jeunesse,
Le pouvoir lui faillit, mais non la hardiesse ;
Il eut pour le brûler des astres le plus beau ;

Il mourut poursuivant une haute aventure ;
Le ciel fut son désir, la mer sa sepulture :
Est-il plus beau dessein, ou plus riche tombeau ?

PHILIPPE DESPORTES

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE was born in Canterbury in February, 1564 (n. s.), and baptised, as the register of S. George the Martyr shows, on the 26th of that month. He was the son of middle-class parents of good standing, his father a shoemaker, his mother the daughter of a clergyman. Nothing is known of his childhood until he was fifteen, which is natural enough in an age that thought little about childhood and did not multiply its records. Just before he was fifteen (on January 14, 1579, n. s.), he entered King's School, Canterbury, on a

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scholarship, from which we judge that the arts of reading and writing and elementary Latin must then have been familiar to him. Like most young Elizabethan boys, he had probably attended an 'elementarie' school—these were kept in many cases by the parish clerk—where the rudiments were given to children whose parents were not of a position to have private tutors. He spent two years in the King's School, and then passed on to Cambridge on one of the scholarships founded by Archbishop Parker in 1575. He was entered at Corpus Christi College early in the year 1581 (n. s.)—he had probably begun residence just after Christmas, 1580—matriculated on March 17, 1581 (n. s.), and spent the next six and a half years in the curious, semi-monastic atmosphere of late 16th-century Cambridge.

His education from the age of seventeen to that of twenty-three, when he took his M.A. degree and left Cambridge for London, must have been narrow, over-disciplined and over-specialised. The universities in the later part of Elizabeth's reign had a social organisation that made them half monastery, half school, and they provided an education with a strong theological bias, with little of the humanities and less of true science. A weary sense of pettiness and futility is conveyed by the curricula laid down in the Statutes; pettiness in the minute regulations such as that which forbade a student to go outside the college gates alone; futility in the outworn logic and rhetoric in which hair-splitting and fruitless ratiocination was exalted to the position of an art. Discipline of a kind there was, the discipline of gymnastics, or, at least, of drill. But of food for imagination or thought there seems hardly enough to occupy an ardent mind for more than a year or two.

And Marlowe, as far as we know, was spared little of the system. The researches of Professor Moore Smith have proved that he resided almost continuously during his first four years with hardly more than a month's holiday a year.

In the academic year 1580-1, he was in residence continuously from January, with the exception of one (perhaps two) week's absence in the summer quarter. In 1581-2 he missed six or seven weeks; in 1582-3, seven; and in 1583-4, three or four. In 1584 he took his B.A. degree at the end of the second quarter, and entered immediately upon the course of M.A. work. Then, indeed, some relaxation appears and though the records for the year 1585-6 are missing, those of the other two years show an absence of about half of every quarter in 1584-5 and the same in 1586-7.

The fact that payments for his scholarship continue after he had taken his B.A. degree show that he must have intended to take Holy Orders, for the Parker scholarships were only renewable on that condition. But his connection with Cambridge became looser and looser during his last three years of residence until in July, 1587, he took his M.A. degree and his original intention was abandoned. This change of purpose might be explained in many ways, for discrepancies between the theology of Cambridge in the 1580's and the robust and ardent mind of a poet are not far to seek.

✓ In the summer of 1587, Marlowe seems to have come to London. By the following March, both parts of *Tamburlaine* had been played and were receiving comments from his contemporaries, of which Greene's have come down to us. The first part, at least, was probably begun before he left Cambridge and most likely produced before the end of 1587 (n. s.); the second, we know, was written after the success of the first had created a demand for Marlowe's work. This was not the only literary work of his last years at Cambridge, for it is to that period that we must assign the translation of Ovid's *Elegies*; of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* and the first draft of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Clearly the last years of his residence in Cambridge were not wholly occupied with 'exercises' for the M.A. degree.

There is much uncertainty about the dates of all Marlowe's writings, and, worse still, about the authenticity of some, or parts of some. For *Tamburlaine* we can only give a conjectural date of composition, and the quarto of 1590, in which the play was first printed, did not bear his name. We have no technical proof that it was Marlowe who wrote *Tamburlaine*; the tradition has been built up by general allusions. But no recent critic has doubted it, for the evidence of his paternity is on every page.)

With his next play, *Faustus*, both problems assume a more vicious form. Again, in the absence of definite evidence, we must conjecture the date, and the latter part of 1588, or the earlier part of 1589 is that generally accepted. That is satisfactory, for it puts the play where the evidence of thought and tone would put it, between *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta*, while meeting the demands of such external evidence as we have. The second problem, that of authorship, is in worse case, for the text of *Faustus* has reached us in so corrupt a form that, while we are sure that some parts are by Marlowe and equally sure that some others are not, we have no means of telling how much of his work has been sacrificed to make room for the spurious comic scenes.

By the time *Faustus* was produced, Marlowe must have lived in London nearly two years. We have no means yet—possibly we shall never have them—of drawing a picture of his way of life during the five years between his coming to London and his death in 1593. But with two groups of men, Sir Walter Raleigh and his circle, and the Walsingshams of Scadbury, Kent, we know him to have been connected, and of another group, the actors and managers of the Lord Admiral's and the Lord Strange's Companies, he must have been a member, as his plays were performed by them. And two men, Robert Greene and Thomas Kyd, speak of him, before or immediately after his death, with dislike.

In this year (October 1, 1589), Marlowe was summoned

before the Recorder. He entered into recognisances to appear at the next sessions at Newgate, and, being bound over, was released, apparently upon the bail of two London citizens, Richard Kytchine of Clifford Inn, and Humphrey Rowland of East Smithfield. Most of his biographers agree that the trouble was connected with the theatres, for the circumstances and form of the entry show that the offence was committed within the City of London and, though not heinous or treasonable, was serious enough to warrant a bail of forty pounds.

His next play, *The Jew of Malta*, was probably written in 1589 or 1590, but we have few means of judging. A lower limit for its date is given by the death of the Duc de Guise (December 23, 1588) and an upper one by the beginning of Henslowe's references to the play, February 26, 1592 (n. s.). But these are wide limits and we can at best only suggest the position of the play in relation to the rest of Marlowe's work. It follows naturally after *Faustus* and leads naturally on to the group of plays in which the Machiavellian spirit and system is studied in its bearings on the individual mind and on the state: *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Whole Contention between the Two Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*. The date of the first of these three is limited even more definitely than that of the *Jew of Malta* by the death of the Guise, for the events which lead up to it are the main theme of the *Massacre*, while *The Contention* and the *True Tragedy* both appear, by internal evidence of repetition and development of ideas, to follow it again. The relative order is then, first, *The Jew of Malta*; second, *The Massacre*; third and fourth, *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*. What intervals lay between them it is impossible to say, but the group as a whole cannot well have been begun before the end of 1588, and was probably finished before *Edward II* was written.

In the cases of *The Jew of Malta* and the *Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe's authorship has always been accepted,

since both plays are attributed to him in the earliest surviving editions. In the case of the two companion plays, *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, his authorship is by no means generally accepted to-day and until recently they were not assigned to him. The question still admits of much discussion and, though I feel by no means sure what is the relationship between the surviving texts of these plays and Marlowe's original share in them, I should be sorry to reject them entirely from a consideration of the whole body of his work.

Marlowe's last play, *Edward II*, belongs probably to the year 1591, or to the spring of 1591-2. Later than April of 1592 it can hardly be for, as Professor Tucker Brooke points out, unmistakable borrowings from it begin to occur in contemporary literature after that date. His authorship of this play has never been disputed; by 1591-2 he was a well-known writer; the play was published soon after his death (Q1—lost—1593. Q2 1594) from a textually sound source and the surviving quarto bears his name.

One other detail about Marlowe's life in 1591 reaches us later. Kyd, writing about Marlowe to Sir John Puckering, the Lord Keeper, in June, 1593, says that two years earlier both poets had worked together in the same room, and that Marlowe had attempted to take service with Kyd's patron, or 'lord.' Nothing has yet been added to this information, but the tone of Kyd's reference suggests that, when Marlowe 'bore name' to serve my lord, the service was of short duration.

The last six months of Marlowe's life can now be filled in in more detail than can any other period of the same length. To the early months of 1593 (n. s.) is generally assigned his poem, *Hero and Leander*, which bears internal evidence of being late (in fact, his latest) work, and was left unfinished at his death. The theatres were closed during this period, and it is generally assumed that Marlowe was staying in Kent with Thomas Walsingham during part

at least of that spring. So far conjecture. The rest is more certain.

On May 12, 1593, Thomas Kyd, the dramatist, was in trouble with the authorities, and his rooms were searched for incriminating material. The political papers which they expected did not appear, but some documents, readily filed as 'atheistic' by the Elizabethan officials, were found there.¹ We find Kyd, in June, 1593, protesting that these were Marlowe's (nothing seems more improbable when we read them . . .) and that they had lain among his papers since 1591, when he and Marlowe had worked together. It is probable, but not certain, that he used the same device to exculpate himself in May, for six days later, on May 18, a warrant was issued from the Star Chamber to apprehend Marlowe and to bring him from Thomas Walsingham's house, or anywhere else where he was to be found, and produce him before the Court. Marlowe entered his appearance on May 20th, but no further record of the case has yet been discovered. For the next ten days Marlowe seems to have stayed with a relative at Deptford, perhaps under orders to remain within reach of the Courts.

On Whitsun Eve, May 26, an accusation of an alarming kind was filed against Marlowe, the famous testimony of Baines (Harl. 6853, f. 307-8), in which several 'atheistical' and blasphemous sayings of his were reported. Before action was taken on this evidence Marlowe was dead, but the informer's note may well be connected with the events of May 12, and the summons of May 18. Other documents of the same kind (Harl. 6848, f. 190, etc.) came in after Marlowe's death, and the elaborate investigations undertaken at Cerne in the following March show the far-reaching effects of this sudden exposure of 'atheistical doctrines.'

The recent researches of Mr. T. L. Hotson have made the last day of Marlowe's life clearer than any other. According to the evidence laid before the Crown Jury that viewed his body at Deptford Strand, he spent the day at an inn

¹ Harl. 6848, f. 187-9.

kept by a certain Eleanor Bull in Deptford with three men, Ingram Frizer, Robert Poley and Nicholas Skeres. They were alone with Marlowe at the time of his death and, according to the tale which they presented to the jurors, Marlowe attacked Frizer in such a way that he was obliged to kill him in self-defence. This seems to have satisfied the sixteen jurors; it is far from satisfying Marlowe's present-day biographers, among whom there is a prevailing impression that he was deliberately murdered.

He was buried in the parish church of St. Nicholas, Deptford, on June 1, 1593. The poem of *Hero and Leander* was finished by George Chapman and published in 1598.

NOTE I

The main authorities for the life of Marlowe are:—

Rev. A. Dyce: *An Account of Marlowe and his Writings*, prefaced to the 1858 edition of the *Works*.

The Statutes of the University of Cambridge, especially *Statuta Reginæ Elizabethæ anno duo-decimo regni sui edita*.

Sir Sidney Lee: *Marlowe*, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

A. W. Ward's Editions of *Faustus* (Oxford, 1878-1901).

F. S. Boas: Introduction to his edition of the *Works of Kyd* (1901).

J. H. Ingram: *Christopher Marlowe and his Associates* (1904), a volume chiefly valuable for its photographic reproductions of documents relating to the poet's life in Canterbury, Cambridge and London.

G. C. Moore Smith: *Marlowe at Cambridge* (M. L. R., 1909) which gave the details of Marlowe's terms of residence at Corpus Christi College.

C. F. Tucker Brooke: *The Authorship of the Second and Third Parts of Henry VI* (Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1912).

F. C. Danchin: Articles in the *Revue Germanique*, 1912, 1913, 1914, on the date of the second part of *Tamburlaine*, and the Harleian documents that concern Marlowe.

C. F. Tucker Brooke: *The Marlowe Canon* (P. M. L. A., vol. XXXVI, 3 1922).

T. L. Hotson: *The Death of Marlowe* (Nonsuch, 1925).

NOTE II: THE MARLOWE CANON

The Canon of Marlowe's works as established by C. F. Tucker

Brooke and followed in this volume may be summarised in the following way :—

1. Plays, early editions of which bear Marlowe's name on the title page: *Dido* (1594); *Edward II* (1594); *The Massacre at Paris* (n.d. ca. 1600); *Doctor Faustus* (1604); *The Jew of Malta* (1633).
2. Plays published anonymously, but assigned to Marlowe on internal evidence: *Tamburlaine*, Parts I and II (1590); *The First Part of the Contention between York and Lancaster* (1594); *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* (1595).
3. Poems printed with Marlowe's name: *Hero and Leander* (1598); *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* (1600, in *England's Helicon*); Fragment, 'I walked along a stream' (1600, in *England's Parnassus*); the First book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (1600); Ovid's *Elegies* (six early undated editions probably between 1600 and 1640).

Several works have been wrongly attributed to him and are now rejected by the majority of his biographers. These are :—

1. Plays: *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*; *Arden of Feversham*; *Titus Andronicas*; *Richard III*; *The Taming of A Shrew*; *Selimus*; *Edward III*; *A Larum for London*; *The Maiden's Holiday*; *Lust's Dominion*.
2. Poems: *Dialogue in Verse* (repr. Dyce); Latin Dedication of Watson's *Amintæ Gaudiæ*; Latin epitaph upon Roger Manwood.

CHAPTER II

EARLY WORK

THE ELEGIES OF OVID. THE FIRST BOOK OF LUCAN. DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE

“Therefore when Flint and Iron weare away,
Verse is immortall, and shall nere decay.
To verse let Kings give place, and Kingly showes,
And bankes ore which gold-bearing *Tagus* flowes.
Let base conceipted witts admire vilde things,
Faire *Phæbus* lead me to the Muses springs.
About my head be quivering mirtle wound,
And in sad lovers heads let me be found.
The living, not the dead can envie bite,
For after death all men receive their right.
Then though death rakes my bones in funerall fire,
Ile live, and as he puls me downe mount higher.”

Book I. Elegia 15, ll. 31-42

MARLOWE'S choice of theme in the *Elegies* suggests that this work attracted him as an escape from the rigid life of an Elizabethan student, in which the mechanical processes of thinking were developed to the exclusion of most other aspects of life. It was natural for a young Elizabethan to translate from the classics, and Ovid was one of the poets who most readily suggested himself,¹ but the *Elegies* were hardly likely to form a part of the Cambridge curriculum, and a joyous surrender to their spirit marks Marlowe's exuberant, if not always happy, translation. The task of reading them may become a burden to the modern reader unless he can recapture some of the inexhaustible ardour that carried Marlowe through that of translating them. To enjoy them as he did it would

¹ Within the 40 odd years from 1560 to 1602 there appeared ten partial or complete versions of Ovid's works in English, a number only rivalled by translations of Seneca, between 1546 and 1581, which number ten also.

perhaps be necessary to be situated as he was, to be young, ardent, vital, tired of fruitless abstract thinking and ratiocination and to meet in this book for perhaps the first time a series of poems in worship of the beauty of sense (even if not always in its most beautiful form), and setting forth this worship in simple, though rich and concrete, description. So great was its appeal to Marlowe that the translation is interspersed with lines and images of grace and rapture, which suggest that later imagery of *Tamburlaine*, of the rare lyric passages in *Faustus*, and of *Hero and Leander*. Yet the *Elegies* only express a part of what must have been in Marlowe's mind at this time, for the country into which they lead him is untouched by that fine, clear wind of thought which inspires *Tamburlaine*, the first work of his independent growth. In the *Elegies* of Ovid he found part of what he sought—a full and irresponsible love of life—just as in his other early translation, the first book of the *Pharsalia*, he found a partial expression of his thirst for sovereignty and love of arms. But it is possible that, in the ardour of first discovery he over-estimated the completeness of the agreement between Ovid's poetry and his own need. Certain it is that when he had finished the *Elegies* he laid the theme aside and wrote nothing else in that spirit.

The *Elegies* at their best are marked by a felicity of diction and imagery and a smoothness, often a musical quality, in the couplet that are a foretaste of the mature beauty of the lines of *Hero and Leander*:

Loe I confesse, I am thy captive I,
And hold my conquer'd hands for thee to tie."¹

The simple grace revealed in this exclamation, like many qualities in the work of this earliest period (the period of the *Elegies* and of *Dido*), seems to have lain dormant through the middle years of Marlowe's career, to reappear in full and clear strength in his last poem, which is in some

¹ Book I, Elegia 2, ll. 19-20.

ways, curiously akin to these first attempts. Beauty of single phrases, beauty of description and image seem to be all his care. The poems are a deliberate escape from thought into the world of simple, sensuous things, and the torture of conflicting ideas has not yet begun : there is no hint of Faustus's vain effort to interpret a mysterious universe, part pain, part glory ; even Tamburlaine's taut, attenuated aspiration which preludes it is hardly suggested. In their stead are passages like these :

“ In summers heate and mid-time of the day
 To rest my limbes upon a bed I lay,
 One window shut, the other open stood,
 Which gave such light as twincles in a wood,
 Like twilight glimps at setting of the Sunne
 Or night being past, and yet not day begunne.”¹

It is a world of sense, of colour, of unexplained and unexamined beauty. Simple joy and sensuous contentment in the richness of the passing moment are, for the last time for many years, reflected in Marlowe's poetry. Therefore it is also poetry full of those pictures that the memory reproduces only when the mind has illuminated with its own joy the thing seen. For the last time, until we come to *Hero and Leander*, there are traces of that loving observation of the common earth that does not otherwise distinguish Marlowe's work :

“ The aire is cold, and sleepe is sweetest now
 And birdes send forth shrill notes from every bough :
 Whither runst thou, that men and women love not ?
 Hold in thy rosy horses that they move not.”²

It is a mind as yet free from bitterness, open and receptive, drawing in beauty with every breath. The constriction, the pain and pressure of thought, have not yet come near it, though the beginnings of these things must have been at work silently and out of sight.

¹ Book I, Elegia 5, ll. 1-6.

² Book I, Elegia 13, ll. 7-10.

In more alert mood Marlowe's expression is vivid, his mind quick to see and quick to record. He even achieves a certain terseness and neatness of expression at times which again suggests the compactness of the images of *Hero and Leander*:

" Yet tragedies and scepters fild my lines,
But though I apt were for such high deseignes
Love laughed at my cloak, . . ."¹

Already he shows an aptitude for the epigrammatic distich, the lapidary style which enshrines in briefest space some quintessential wisdom. Naturally the wisdom is not yet that of *Hero and Leander*, but the attempt is made again and again.

" Garments do weare, jewells and gold do wast,
The fame that verse gives doth for ever last."²

The smoothness of the verse here could be paralleled many times. There are, it is true, harsh and obscure passages, some of them meaningless mistranslations. For this work is uneven, ranging from exquisite felicity to clumsy and jarring lines. Yet equally upon every page are these passages of smooth, clear workmanship which foretell the lucidity of Marlowe's most characteristic poetry. Apparently as he went on with the work his skill developed and the later Elegies, such as the fourth of the second book and fifth of the third book, have continuous charm of form. The first Elegy of the second book, except for the jarring metre of the twentieth line and the mistranslation of the twenty-fifth, gives a convincing impression that it has been rendered as well as it could have been. Perhaps the best of all, on the whole, is the fifteenth of the first book, translated also by Ben Jonson, who surpasses Marlowe in skill and neatness but falls below him in the spirit of his rendering. For the lines that appealed to Marlowe such as those

¹ Book II, Elegia 18, ll. 13-15. ² Book I, Elegia 10, ll. 61-2.

on poetry,¹ meant more to him than any in the elegy meant to Ben Jonson.

The ideas contained in the Elegies, were I think at this stage a secondary consideration to Marlowe; still less did he trouble himself with the interpretation of life that was implied in them. Now and again, as in the fifth Elegy of the second book, his zeal seems to have flagged, as if the theme were uncongenial or uninspiring, and from time to time his enthusiasm rises as if an echo were given to some desire of his own heart. But the only approach to impressive or passionate expression is made in the more solemn passages, which are naturally rare. The lines upon Lucretius in the fifteenth Elegy of the first book quickened his pulse, and the comparative seriousness of the passage upon death in the eighth of the third book called forth a deeper quality in his lines:

“Loftie *Lucretius* shall live that howre,
That nature shall dissolve this earthly bower” . . .

and again:

“The gods care we are cald, and men of piety,
And some there be that thinke we have a deity.
Outrageous death profanes all holy things
And on all creatures obscure darcknesse brings. . . .
When bad fates take good men, I am forbod
By secreat thoughts to thinke there is a god.”²

But beyond an occasional hint as to the passages which fired his imagination and those which left it cold, Marlowe reveals little of the thoughts or ideas that occupied his mind at the time of the writing of the Elegies. Whatever these were, we may be sure they were incompletely expressed by Ovid's poems, and his translation of them, exquisite as in parts it is, is rather a prelude to his independent work than an integral part of it.

In his translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* Marlowe suffered

¹ *Li.* 23-42.

² Book III, Elegia 8, *ll.* 17-20, 35-6.

all the disadvantages that crippled some of the earlier translators ; he attempted a line-for-line rendering which, in spite of the added freedom of the blank verse form that he used in this case, left his verse harsh and often obscure. Occasionally this enforced condensation made for brevity, clinched the significance of an image or sentiment. Sometimes, even, a clear picture was revealed which showed few signs of this thwarting process. The image of the oak tree, for example (*ll. 137-44*), has remarkable freedom, but there are few passages that have even the faint appeal of this :

“ Like to a tall oake in a fruitfull field,
 Bearing old spoiles and conquerors monuments,
 Who though his root be weake, and his owne waight
 Keepe him within the ground, his armes al bare,
 His body (not his boughs) send forth a shade ;
 Though every blast it nod, and seeme to fal,
 When all the woods about stand bolt up-right,
 Yet he alone is held in reverence.”¹

Occasionally there is a hint of power in spite of roughness of metre, a power derived from forceful imagery and energy of vision, given, perhaps, an additional macabre quality by the contortion of its expression. Such lines as those in which the dissolution of the universe is described reveal this quality, but it is an expression which reminds us rather of such a writer as Donne than of Marlowe at any stage of his career, for the essential quality of Marlowe’s unfettered expression was, from first to last, its lucidity :

“ Confused stars shal meeete, celestiall fire
 Fleete on the flouds, the earth shoulder the sea, . . .
 Disolve the engins of the broken world.”²

Marlowe’s wonted clarity of image appears, as is natural, but rarely :

“ Or mount the sunnes flame bearing charriot,
 And with bright restles fire compasse the earth,

¹ *The First Booke of Lucan*, *ll. 137-44*.

² *Ib.*, 75-6, 80.

Undaunted though her former guide be chang'd.
Nature, and every power shal give thee place,
 What God it please thee be, or where to sway : "¹

One line occurs which suggests the music of *Tamburlaine*, and its majesty of movement is unexpected in this chaos of unharmonious yet impressive sounds forced on by the sheer power of the mind that wielded them :

" But *Figulus* more seene in heavenly mysteries,
 Whose like *Ægyptian Memphis* never had.
 For skill in stars, and tune-full planeting,
 In this sort spake."²

One other passage seems to have stirred Marlowe to as free a movement as could be permitted him ; throughout the lines describing the faith of the Druids, cramped as they are, there runs a hint of earnest thought :

" In unfeld woods, and sacred groves you dwell,
 And only gods and heavenly powers you know,
 Or only know you nothing. For you hold
 That soules passe not to silent *Erebus*
 Or *Plutoes* bloodles kingdom, but else where
 Resume a body : so (if truth you sing)
 Death brings long life. Doubtles these northren men
 Whom death the greatest of all feares affright not,
 Are blest by such sweet error, this makes them
 Run on the swords point and desire to die,
 And shame to spare life which being lost is wonne."³

But this passage, with its half-extinguished fire of feeling and its foretaste of themes that were to preoccupy Marlowe for many years, is almost unique.

The translation of the *Pharsalia* seems not to have satisfied him even temporarily, for it was apparently laid aside before the first seven hundred lines were quite finished. This turgid, obscure mixture of gloom and fire which may have appealed to some strange, latent fierceness in Marlowe at this earliest stage, did not more fully answer

his vague thirst for the pomp and glory of war than Ovid's poetry expressed his rapturous love of vitality. In Marlowe's mind there was already hovering—

" . . . one wonder at the least,
Which into words no vertue can digest : "

and the poetry of Ovid and of Lucan was a mere shell in which was to be found nothing of that vision which Marlowe himself throughout his life failed to express completely. He was destined to outstrip both his early models, to see in the wars of Tamburlaine the uncontrollable forces of the soaring mind of man and in the loves of Hero and Leander a consummation of the art of heaven in the senses of man.

Both the translations are probably best regarded as experiments. It was impossible for such a mind as Marlowe's to rest content, in any but its earliest stage, with indirect expression through another man's thought. The limitations of his medium became too immediately apparent. But though both Ovid and Lucan failed to afford him, even indirectly, anything like complete expression, they perhaps made clearer to him, by this very failure, what he desired.

The tragedy of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is an exceedingly difficult play to study because of the continual doubt as to the period at which any given part of it was written. The choice of the theme and the design must, of course, belong to the earliest period; the doubt arises in the case of individual scenes, which may or may not have been written in later, and this doubt is increased several-fold in the case of individual passages, so that it is well to beware of questioning too curiously along these lines. There are many passages which are closely akin to the poetry of the *Elegies* or to that of *Hero and Leander*, but few that reveal the spirit that moves through *Tamburlaine*, and none that suggest the conflict of *Faustus*. Some of the problems that

preoccupy Marlowe in the group of plays beginning with *The Jew of Malta* and ending with *Edward II* are indeed touched upon, but in a mood that is different from that revealed in any of the five plays of intrigue and politics and liker to the mood in which they might have been touched before his keen interest in them had begun, or after it had waned. That is to say, again, that it is a play that has little in common with any but his earliest and his latest moods, and though our inability to distinguish between these may at first appear a paradox, it is, indeed, capable of a simple explanation, for the moods of these two periods were closely akin ; the difference was one of experience.

The theme of *Dido* is one which Marlowe never chose again as the main subject of a play and only very rarely introduced as a subsidiary one ; that theme of love which, with the single exception of *Hero and Leander*, he treated always unusually and often, it must be confessed, ineptly. He found his material, for the most part in the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, but he treated his authority with enough freedom to show that he had his own interpretation of the story and that it differed essentially from Virgil's. For he develops the story of the love of Æneas and Dido until the other elements of Virgil's tale are blotted out by it, thus shifting the focus of interest from a universal to a particular field. Something of this kind must inevitably be done if a part of an epic is to be re-shaped into the form of a play. But this concentration upon the relations of human beings to each other rather than upon the relationship of man to the universe is unlike Marlowe in any but the earliest stage of his career, before his strongest interests had grown clear, or in the latest stage, in which he had begun to lay them aside. The very choice of theme, then, is such as fitted these two periods in his life, but no other.

The modification of the design which follows from this modification of theme, is interesting to trace. Marlowe keeps the main incidents described in *Aeneid* I and IV and

throws into Æneas's long speech (*ll. 416-594*) a condensed version of the narrative of *Æneid* II; ¹ often (as in Jupiter's speech of *ll. 82-108*) he translates the general meaning of Virgil's lines and sometimes even follows a speech in close detail (as Æneas's speech in *ll. 187-202*). On two occasions he quotes directly from the original, as if half afraid, at such moments of crisis as the final parting or the dying speech of Dido, to trust translation.² But if he retains, almost with idolatry, certain lines that made a peculiar appeal to him, he plays havoc with Virgil's narrative in other places. He rejects nearly all the supernatural apparatus and much of the apparatus of the Olympians. Æneas indeed receives his warning to depart (twice in Marlowe's story) from Hermes, the messenger of Jove, but all other omens and agencies are omitted; (perhaps this is a practical consideration, for they would have been tedious to the Elizabethan public). In the same way are lost those reflections and general comments which are the most vital parts of Virgil's book, for they were not germane to Marlowe's purpose. With this consistent eliminating of the supernatural element, the action of the play is lowered from that of a half divine contest—gods and men warring over the founding of the greatest nation of the known world—and becomes a common, though poignant, human story of the conflict between love and the instinct for action when these two are brought sharply into contrast in the mind of one man. If the play of *Dido* constantly reminds us of the like balance of forces in, say, *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is by virtue of Marlowe's rejections and additions that it does so; the suggestion of *Antony and Cleopatra* hardly occurs in a straight-forward reading of *Æneid* IV. In Marlowe's story, on the other hand, the weaker side of Æneas's nature is insisted upon;

¹ With the curious addition of the long description of the death of Priam and the grief of Hecuba, which has clearly given something to the speech of the player in *Hamlet*, but owes next to nothing to Virgil.

² See *Dido*, *ll. 1544-8*, which reproduce *Æneid* IV, *ll. 317-19* and *360-1*, and *Dido* *1718-9*, *21* which are found in *Æneid* IV, *628-9* and *660*.

he makes two attempts, not one, to sail away from Carthage, and the first is abandoned for Dido's pleading.¹ Complications are introduced into the action which illuminate or intensify the human relationships. Iarbus, who is only an indirect agent in Virgil's story, is, in Marlowe's, a jealous and ever-present rival to Æneas and the scenes in which he appears have no precedent in Virgil's account.² Anna's relation to him, again, is Marlowe's addition, as are five or six of the most important dialogues between Æneas and Dido (including the scene in the cave)³ which are all developed from single hints in the original. In the same way, the dialogue between Jupiter and Ganymede which serves as prologue,⁴ the speeches between the Trojans when they meet and recognise their fellow-countrymen in Carthage,⁵ the passages between Dido and Cupid,⁶ between Dido and Anna⁷ and between the Nurse and Cupid⁸ are all without parallel in the *Æneid*. (The whole focus of the play has been altered and Marlowe has given us, instead of a fragment from the consistent structure of Virgil's epic, an attempt, albeit somewhat confusedly expressed, to weigh the forces of love and the desire of kingly power. It was a theme to which he was to return at the end of his career.)

(The poetry of *Dido* is a spontaneous expression of the sense of beauty not yet made poignant by doubt nor touched to finer issues as it is in *Tamburlaine*.) There lingers still about the earlier play some of that contentment that rests in the joy of the senses and is untroubled by further thought, the as yet unshaken happiness of

¹ See *Dido*, 1151-1293 and 1486-1562.

² Iarbus is mentioned twice in *Æneid* IV, once by Anna, in the brief comment "despectus Iarbus" (IV, 36) and once in ll. 195-220 where he prays to Jove to frustrate the love of Æneas and Dido. The second of these passages Marlowe uses in ll. 1095-1116 of his play; all other speeches of Iarbus are his own addition.

³ See *Dido*, 996-1059.

⁴ *Ll.* 1-49.

⁵ *Ll.* 336-68 and the main part of the preceding passage, *ll.* 305-33.

⁶ *Ll.* 656-89.

⁷ *Ll.* 690-730.

⁸ *Ll.* 1372-1408.

the *Elegies*, like the deeper ultimate serenity of *Hero and Leander*:

"Sleepe my sweete nephew in these cooling shades,
Free from the murmure of these running streames,
The crye of beasts, the ratling of the windes,
Or whisking of these leaves, all shall be still, . . ."¹

Beside this may be put Dido's description of the sails and tackle with which she will mend Æneas's ships; I think it is not only the subject, but something in the richness and the warmth of the description which hints at a later drawn picture of a barge upon Cydnus:

"Ile give thee tackling made of riveld gold,
Wound on the barkes of odoriferous trees,
Oares of massie Ivorie full of holes,
Through which the water shall delight to play :
Thy Anchors shall be hewed from Christall Rockes,
Which if thou lose shall shine above the waves :
The Masts whereon thy swelling sailes shall hang,
Hollow Pyramides of silver plate :
The sailes of foulded Lawne, where shall be wrought
The warres of *Troy*, but not *Troyes* overthrow :"²

It would be a bold critic who would undertake to maintain that this passage was not written at a time very near the writing of *Hero and Leander*.

More rarely there is a hint of the more restless mood of *Tamburlaine* as in Æneas's speech upon his fortunes:

" . . . Æneas must away,
Whose golden fortunes clogd with courtly ease,
Cannot ascend to Fames immortall house,
Or banquet in bright honors burnisht hall,
Till he hath furrowed *Neptunes* glassie fieldes,
And cut a passage through his toples hilles : . . ."³

But in the main the poetry of Dido is sunny, effortless and uncrossed by thought or strong emotion.

¹ *Ll.* 629-32.

² *Ll.* 750-9.

³ *Ll.* 1158-62. It is unnecessary to add that these passages are all without parallel in the *Aeneid*.

Both his translations and the earliest play of Marlowe have certain qualities of thought and image that connect them with each other and at the same time separate them clearly from the plays of his maturity which begin with *Tamburlaine*. In all three cases he seems to choose a theme which was more attractive at first sight than on nearer view, a theme to which he did not come back when his powers were fully developed because it was incapable of expressing what afterwards became the dominant force of his life—the desire to know the nature and limits of the spirit of man. There is distinct increase in freedom in *Dido*, yet the closeness with which he sometimes follows Virgil's account shows that he has not yet reached the independence which created *Tamburlaine* from the prose tales of Pedro Mexia and Petrus Perondinus, and the following of a theme which never at any time had much significance for him robbed the play yet further of his characteristic style. He is still under restraint, and there are unassimilated elements in the play that seem to point to the influence of Ovid and the period when he was still liable half-unconsciously to speak with Ovid's tongue—which was certainly not his own. This would, I think, account for occasional ugliness (as in the character of the Nurse and the introductory dialogue between Jupiter and Ganymede) which is without parallel in Marlowe's work after this date. There are abundant signs to suggest that the translations of the *Elegies* and of the *Pharsalia* and the play of *Dido* were all in their different ways preliminary to Marlowe's real work. Taken together they constitute a prelude of a rather curious kind, inasmuch as neither its theme nor its key is adopted in any of the immediately following works. In fact, the most immediately noticeable thing about the next group of plays is the change of tone that accompanies the now definite purpose of his thought. During the writing of his next plays he is preoccupied, to the gradual exclusion of poetry, with problems of man's nature and the tenure of his being. When, after these are explored and laid aside,

his native poetry reappears, it takes up the theme—with certain vital differences—where the group of preliminary work had left it. (But it is not until we reach *Hero and Leander* that we find again the richness and the repose of a poetry that is content with “simple beauty and naught else.”)



CHAPTER III

TAMBURLAINE

"They shall not grow old."

"**A**MIDST the mortifying circumstances attendant upon growing old" not the least is this, that, in measure as we understand the rest of the world better, we understand Christopher Marlowe less. For to understand Marlowe demands eternal youth, and it is an all too frequent experience, as we re-read the early plays, to find lines becoming faint and distant that once held echoes of the harmony that "the morning stars sang together." This is, of course, peculiarly true of Tamburlaine, the first and most resplendent of the plays.

For Tamburlaine is no earthly or human growth, he is built out of no experience that life offers; rather he is built in proud defiance of all that the accumulated wisdom of the ages has declared to be the lot of man. He is the embodiment of a vision, framed of aspirations and of that glory of which

" . . . Youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream."

He is passion's first challenge to a world which seems—as always to a lover—never to have assisted before at the spectacle of passion. Marlowe has a manner of taking that world by storm, or revealing to its astonished eyes—

"The light that never was on sea or land"

and the unique magic of the play derives from the fact that there is—in the first part, at least—no hint of the

fading of that light. It is the drama of confidence stretching to such dazzling heights that we forget the wise saws and maxims of mediocrity, and are bewildered into believing with Marlowe that what has never been achieved is by no means therefore unachievable. "I throw my mind across the chasm," said the Indian hunter, "and my horse follows." That is Marlowe's spirit. The barriers between the possible and the impossible are down. There is but one absolute measure of all phenomena—the human will. And, curiously, in the crevices of our beings, there is something that still recognises this for essential truth and all other records of experience for accidents. Such is the response we make to the appeal of *Tamburlaine*.

For *Tamburlaine* must be in part to us what it primarily was to Marlowe, a poem of escape. It is a poem in which the thwarted instinct for beauty finds its outlet, not normally, perhaps even hysterically, but with a delirious rapture that raised it far above the lyric power of his contemporaries. All that is farthest from the calm, intellectual regularity of academic life he takes for his province. Barbaric and primitive war, barbaric and primitive love, bright oriental colour, and clamorous oriental music are the stuff of which *Tamburlaine* is made. The intoxication of wide spaces and swift movement, of the uncivilised splendour of the Scythian horses inspires its poetry. It is the poetry of imagination at last released and making its dream in defiance of fact. It is for this spontaneous love of beauty in its every form, for this catholicity of joy, that most of Marlowe's readers remember *Tamburlaine*.

It is difficult to separate the play from the great central figure that dominates it, nor is it necessary at first. For in *Tamburlaine* the passion, the exaltation, the poetry and the hyperbole are concentrated, and through him Marlowe speaks, though for the first time, with no uncertain voice. There is a line near the beginning of the play, when Menander is describing the Scythian shepherd, that goes to the heart

of the matter and puts Marlowe's poetry and philosophy for us into some half-dozen unforgettable words :

" Like his desire, lift upwards and divine . . . "

The first impression that Tamburlaine makes is sudden, swift and amazing ; he is compact of hyperbole, of passion, of exaltation. His audience is a little uncertain at first ; interested and astonished, but withholding judgment. Then come the lines spoken to Theridamas :)

" I hold the Fates bound fast in yron chaines,
And with my hand turne Fortunes wheel about,
And sooner shall the Sun fall from his Spheare
Than *Tamburlaine* be slaine or overcome."¹

And the audience is lifted from the plane on which judgments are given or withheld, mastered by that eagerness which transcends criticism. It is boasting which has no parallel in the wise literature of gracious, civilised peoples. No Greek thinker ever touched such a passion except to rebuke and chastise its distant prototype, the *ubris* of the drama. In the loose, fantastic and undisciplined poetry of Scandinavian scalds and Irish bards we may perhaps find something to put beside it, but, again, the boasts of Cuchulainn lack compactness and intensity beside Tamburlaine's. And at the same time there is something winning—almost childish—in his eagerness for the great battle with the Persian host. His thirst for sovereignty and love of arms are passions springing from no base source. And, in his crowning vision of the triumph in Persepolis, romance and fanatic fervour go hand in hand :

" And ride in triumph through *Persepolis* ?
Is it not brave to be a King, *Techelles* ?
Usumcasane and *Fheridamas*,
Is it not passing brave to be a King,
And ride in triumph through *Persepolis* ? "²

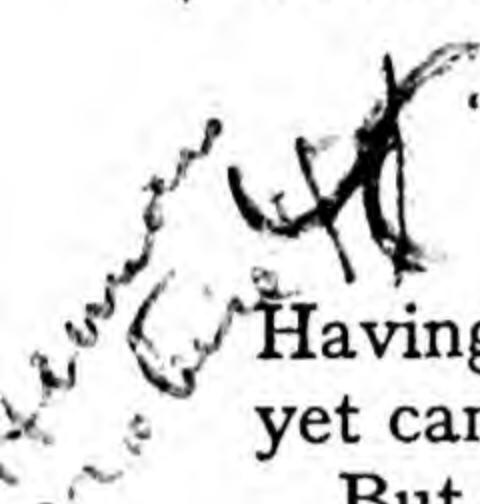
¹ *Ll.* 369-72.

² *Ll.* 755-9.

On nearer view there is seen to be a peculiar quality attaching to these emotions, which lifts them clear of the contamination of the vulgar or the superficial. However fantastic it may be, (Tamburlaine's hyperbole is seldom absurd, even when he describes in words which fail of their effect the mountain-tops melting at the sight of Zenocrate's beauty. There is an infectious magic about his boasting because, when we look closely at it we wonder whether, after all, the thing that it pursues is inconceivable.) Llyl's hyperboles we set aside as trivial because we know that they were not for him the symbols or shadows of truth. And if Marlowe's extravagance had been like Llyl's, he, too, would have sacrificed the significance of character and of idea. (But Tamburlaine is set upon the attainment of something that lies at the uttermost bounds of possibility, in unknown and uncharted country, so that the quest is followed with breathless anticipation, and his desire finds an echo, faint or clear, in every mind.) Thus, paradoxically, Tamburlaine is too near the essentials of life for ridicule. And when he declares his influence more potent than that of the gods, or prepares, against impossible odds, to win over Theridamas and his thousand horse, his tone recalls less the boasting of some Scandinavian thane than the fervour of religious fanaticism. (He will scale the heavens, as Jove did, and become immortal: will and imagination will triumph over physical obstacles, over the conditions of man's life, over the apparent laws of man's nature. This is no other than the faith that moves mountains.)

There must then be something of uncommon significance in Tamburlaine so to transmute these otherwise common elements, and the question of what this is brings us back to our first impression of the play as an expression of aspiration and of desire. This desire, which is in its nature vague, limitless and undefined, is more often than not betrayed and misinterpreted by Marlowe's effort to express it. This is perhaps the normal fate of any aspiration

detached from the phenomena and terminology of everyday life, yet, even so, the clarity with which it is preserved in rare lines where its quality is unclouded, is startling. To define it, when Marlowe himself has almost failed, is ludicrous. It is an eternal concomitant of the spirit of man that transforms his effort into something endued with strange, far-reaching significance. For Tamburlaine embodies—

 "Man's desire and valiance that range
All circumstance, and come to port unspent."

Having this, he has a quality which cannot be defined and yet cannot be mistaken.

But, from time to time throughout the play, Marlowe tries to define it. He looks for a concrete form with which to invest it, and for a time it almost seems that he is succeeding. The form he has chosen is a bold, unquestioning picture of the supreme glory of material power. Conquest and kingship are the bourne of Tamburlaine's aspiration ; that, Marlowe tells us, is the form in which this instinct of man's spirit can most fitly express itself. And for a time we listen, overpersuaded by his urgency and wondering whether, after all, this may not be true. Perhaps the '*gloria mundi*' has never been more frankly worshipped or invested in colours more radiant than in those lines of Theridamas :

"A God is not so glorious as a King :
I thinke the pleasure they enjoy in heaven
Can not compare with kingly joyes in earth. . . ." ¹

But even in the conclusion of this passage there is a decline as soon as Theridamas tries to put his vision into concrete terms of kingly power—a decline which fairly represents what happens throughout the play whenever this attempt is made.

¹ *Ll.* 762-4.

(For failure is inevitable ; we realise it after the first two acts. The form Marlowe has chosen has no power to express the idea that inspired him, and the idea survives only in those moments in which it escapes and detaches itself. 'Nature,' Marlowe says, 'doth teach us all to have aspyring minds,' and there follows his idea of the soul, the restless, inspiring force of life, in perhaps the noblest lines he ever wrote. And then, at the end, comes the inevitable bathos.) To what is all this aspiration and hunger directed ? "To the ripest fruit of all," Marlowe tries to persuade us :

"The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne." ¹

We do not believe him. We go back to the lines about the "faculties" of the soul and take care never again to link them with what follows. For the fact is that Marlowe has suddenly—it may be all unconsciously—broken faith with his idea. The instinct is there, magically defined and passionate. The error, the inability to grasp in a weaker mood its full significance, occurs when Marlowe attempts to give it a specific direction. (In a sense his mental biography is a history of successive attempts of this kind. The spirit of Tamburlaine eventually becomes subdued to what it works in and the aspiration of the early acts slips from him and is lost before we realise it. So it is with Marlowe himself, who began with writing *Tamburlaine* and ended with writing *Edward II*. Yet the fundamental idea, that man can, if he will, reach the sublime, that what has never been accomplished is not therefore impossible, remains unshaken to the end.)

And so the first part of *Tamburlaine* becomes a study of the irresistible power of a mind concentrating upon an end which it pursues with unsleeping singleness of purpose. In the supreme moments of the early part of the play in which his career and his life alike hang in the balance, Tamburlaine

is upheld, sustained and carried to triumph by nothing except this fixedness of purpose.) He confronts Theridamas with the odds ninety-nine to the hundred against him. It is noticeable that Marlowe puts him physically at the mercy of the enemy :

" Keep all your standings, and not stir a foote,
My selfe will bide the danger of the brunt . . .
Whom seekst thou Persean ? I am *Tamburlain*."¹

He wins through on the hundredth chance, but—as is true of all his subsequent victories—it is a triumph of the mind. He rests everything upon the power to carry home his indomitable conviction :

" Forsake thy king and do but joine with me
And we will triumph over all the world."²

and it is the rest of this speech that, with its comparatively quiet, yet irresistible persuasion, turns the mind of Theridamas from his allegiance and fills him and the audience with that inexplicable faith upon which the development of the play depends.

(Even when he has an army at his back, it is the mind of Tamburlaine that triumphs, not his cohorts.) Marlowe does not always make this as clear as he might, but it is always there. It is the same sort of coercion that Tamburlaine exercises over the mind of Bajazet ; it is revealed as soon as we try to penetrate the superficial crudeness of these scenes. For surely a king like Bajazet would have resisted Tamburlaine's insults and refused to give any response, if he had not been under a stronger compulsion than the fear of death. Tamburlaine at the highest moments of his power seldom employs physical force against his victims. He dominates Bajazet's mind, and the power to resist goes out of the Turk. It is the

¹ *Ll.* 346-7, 9.

² *Ll.* 367-8.

way of a snake with a squirrel ; it robs the victim of its sense of proportion by raising in its mind a mirage of inexplicable and unfounded terror. Marlowe does not make this quite clear, perhaps. An actor such as Alleyn would have done it for him with a look, a pause and a gesture, though for the reader of three hundred years later there is some delay before the intention is understood. But it is an integral part of the conception of the genius of Tamburlaine, and though Marlowe's hand falters sometimes, his idea never changes.

Tamburlaine, then, is a play in which the protagonists are ideas more or less adequately expressed through the minds and characters of men, and it follows that the most vital of these ideas are concerned with the nature of the mind, with its relations to the material universe and to that other, vaguer world which seems to envelop man, his motives, his actions and his surroundings, and which Marlowe at this stage still, for the most part, names God. There are other elements in *Tamburlaine*, of course, but they sink into insignificance beside those questions which occupied Marlowe's early years : 'What is the soul ?' 'What is God ?' And these bring inevitably with them a host of criticisms, explicit and implicit, of the existing efforts to explain the relationship between these two forces. The climax of this conflict is not reached until *Faustus*, but the beginnings are clear in *Tamburlaine*.

What does Marlowe at this period understand by ' the soul ' ? In general, it is, of course, the seat of thought and mental activity, the innermost part of man's being, the ultimate citadel of his personality ; an imperishable essence. But, more than this, it is the source of the very power to think and of the restless desire for knowledge ; the part which is mysteriously touched with beauty, the part to which God tunes his harmonies. All this is explicitly stated by Tamburlaine himself (869-77, 1960) but we may go further and say that the soul is also the inspiration which sustains Tamburlaine, and in this sense the

whole play becomes a study of the idea of the soul, which—

‘ Still climing after knowledge infinite,
And alwaies mooving as the restles Spheares,
Wils us to weare our selves and never rest, . . . ’

What then (apart from the specific tendency with which Marlowe falsely seeks to invest this instinct in *Tamburlaine*) is the object of this striving? I do not think Marlowe succeeds in telling us this even implicitly, but I think he reveals enough of himself for conjecture to have a fairly firm basis.

To make this conjecture it is necessary to decide precisely what is here Marlowe’s idea of God, and this is not an easy task because the allusions are confused. All creeds and forms of religious thought are mingled in the empire of Tamburlaine even as they were in the Asia Minor of the late middle ages—or, for the matter of that, in the mind of Christopher Marlowe in the late 16th century. ‘ Jove,’ ‘ Jupiter,’ ‘ the gods,’ ‘ heaven,’ appear alternately as mild euphemisms for the ideas the modern world conveys—equally evasively—under terms like ‘ Providence.’ The word ‘ God ’ is used more distinctively (though sometimes ‘ Jove ’ has almost the same connotation). ‘ God ’ is generally used to express Marlowe’s highest conceptions of the supreme power, and perhaps the noblest of these is found in the second part, where the idea of God as a spirit is clearly and unerringly expressed :

“ . . . he that sits on high and never sleeps,
Nor in one place is circumscribable,
But every where fils every Continent
With strange infusion of his sacred vigor . . . ”¹

There is nothing vague or uncertain about this last line and we may safely take it as the supreme reach of Marlowe’s

imagination, touched once, though by no means maintained throughout the play. In interesting conjunction with it, stands Tamburlaine's claim that his spirit is itself part of the nature of God.

" . . . the flesh of *Tamburlain*,
 Wherein an incorporeall spirit mooves,
 Made of the mould whereof thy selfe consists
 Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious
 Ready to levie power against thy throne." ¹

To add to these two passages Tamburlaine's eulogy of the soul, is to come upon a rather interesting suggestion. For Marlowe appears to have been on the verge of formulating the idea that the spirit and 'desire' of man are neither more nor less than God in man. It is well to say only that he was upon the verge of this conclusion because I think that (any possibility of the influence of Plato being left out of the question for obvious reasons), had he effected the supreme conjunction between these ideas, there would have been no need for the writing of *Faustus*. But even in its incomplete state the conception, which is so obviously not derived from Plato, but is a tentative, imperfect, original idea, is startlingly modern, or at least startlingly independent of his contemporaries.

A man who had reached such an idea at twenty-three and who had, moreover, been through the mill of contemporary theological training might well have something interesting to say by way of comment upon those contemporaries. And much of the second part of *Tamburlaine* does, in point of fact, supply us with this comment in two complementary lines of thought.

In the second part of *Tamburlaine*, Mahometans and Christians are introduced with indiscriminate frequency. The direct references to the Christians are, for the most part, cautious and colourless, but a few are rich in significance. When he spoke of Mahometans, however, Marlowe

¹ *Li.* 3787-91

had a freer hand and under this disguise the basis of his hostility to Christianity reveals itself. What he condemns in Mahometanism he condemns equally in Christianity (though for Christianity itself he reserves a contempt that he does not visit upon its rival). Mahomet appears at first as the prophet and friend of God, who is invoked promiscuously by Tamburlaine, by Turks and by Egyptians. Gradually the references begin to indicate his indifference to his worshippers and his helplessness, until finally Tamburlaine denounces him as a delusion, in the rather puzzling terms :

" In vaine I see men worship *Mahomet*.
 My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell, . . .
 . . . And yet I live untouched by *Mahomet* :
 There is a God full of revenging wrath, . . .
 . . . Whose Scourge am I, and him will I obey.
 . . . Now *Mahomet*, if thou have any power,
 Come downe thy selfe and worke a myracle.

He cannot heare the voice of *Tamburlain*,
 Seeke out another Godhead to adore,
 The God that sits in heaven, if any God
 For he is God alone, and none but he." ¹

What is revealed here is, I think, the refusal to accept the idea of a personal God who intervenes in the material concerns of men, and a denial of the validity of any religion which is based upon such a supposition. It is needless, of course, to remark that these incisive comments are the fruit of observation of Elizabethan Christians, not of fourteenth-century Mahometans.

In a few but daring comments upon Christianity, Marlowe's position is more clearly defined. The first clue is given by Bajazet's exclamation :

" Now will the Christian miscreants be glad,
 Ringing with joy their superstitious belles : " ²

Bajazet may be credited with a natural dislike of Christians,

¹ *Li.* 4290-4313 *passim*.

² *Li.* 1334-5.

but when this dislike takes so specific a turn and reveals individual rancour against a definite quality, we must needs read into the epithet 'superstitious' the feelings of Marlowe and not of the Turk. The rest of the passage may be Bajazet's ; the adjective is Marlowe's own comment and gives the key to his enmity. The evidence of this passage is not unsupported, for it is further explained by the parts given to Baldwin and the Christian leaders who, justifying themselves by casuistry, break the oaths that they have sworn by Christ. In this case the comment is bold and clear and Sigismund's lines :

" Our faiths are sound, and must be consummate,
Religious, righteous, and inviolate." ¹

are ironically denied by his own ultimate conduct.

Finally, Marlowe's hatred of the characteristic vices of the Christian character is proclaimed through the mouth of Orcanes in lines which ring with personal feeling :

" Can there be such deceit in Christians,
Or treason in the fleshly heart of man,
Whose shape is figure of the highest God ? . . .
Then if there be a Christ, as Christians say,
But in their deeds deny him for their Christ : " . . . ²

These lines have an inevitable stamp—a stamp which invariably characterises those utterances of Marlowe's that have a personal bearing or spring from intimate experience. Behind the conflict of ideas here there is keen pain. It would be impertinent to conjecture too closely as to the nature of this, but the tone of the passage leaves us actually in very little doubt as to the origins of Marlowe's disillusionment.

The references to Christ, as distinct from those to Christians, suggest (as indeed they do throughout his works) that Marlowe deliberately separated the two conceptions. It was the practice of Christianity that he hated, not its

original inspiration or the personality of its founder. About these latter things, curiously enough, he troubled himself very little, or the history of his mental development might have been modified.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these passages leave us with the picture of a man whose hostility was directed not to religion itself but to religions ; that is, to the forms with which his contemporaries desecrated the instinct which was for Marlowe

“ The anchor of his purest thoughts . . . and soul
Of all his moral being.”

This manifests itself, not unnaturally, in the form of a hatred of the specific religion or ‘superstition’ which confronted him, so that Marlowe’s utterances have sometimes almost the tone of Lucretius’s and suggest a similarity in the experience and attitudes of the two men.)

Such, then, are the ideas for the expression of which *Tamburlaine* exists, and it might perhaps be expected that, being primarily a vehicle for the expression of ideas, it should fail sometimes to fulfil the conditions of the art-form which these ideas have somewhat arbitrarily chosen. *Tamburlaine* appears to break down when we cease to regard it as a poetic expression of an idea and begin to consider its capacities as drama, and to offend most seriously in those two main functions which distinguish drama—that of revealing the interplay of characters of individual men and that of giving form to a selected part of the apparent incoherence of events. I think, however, that the breakdown is, in both cases, more apparent than real.

What preoccupies us with *Tamburlaine* is not his character. For what, after all, is that character ? If we gather together all the suggestions in the first play we have not enough to give us a clear picture.

Tamburlaine is for the most part endowed with the conventional attributes of a conqueror : when he is not

expounding the transcendent powers of the human will he demonstrates, rather woodenly, the dignity, the pomp and the good-humoured arrogance of a man conscious of carrying all before him. As his triumph becomes more assured this arrogance loses its fascination and becomes either the unbalanced recklessness which dares 'god out of heaven,' or the extravagance that plays with the situation like a child. The puerility of the scenes with Bajazet is part of the conventional temperament of an oriental despot. The freakish, unrestrained moods of these later acts have little or nothing to do with the glittering figure of the earlier scenes who spoke of the destiny of man :

*" To weare ourselves and never rest . . .
Still climbing after knowledge infinite."*

Yet in slight hints, scattered up and down the play, something like a personality is indicated. There is that impetuous directness of Tamburlaine's in a moment of crisis in which we seem to see Marlowe falling back upon an individual mannerism of his own to eke out his imperfect observation :

" Then shall we fight couragiously with them,"

Tamburlaine exclaims,

" Or looke you, I should play the Orator ? " ¹

And, again, look at the cool rapidity with which he assesses Theridamas, the swiftness of his approval, decision and action : a direct method of going to work with another personality :

" With what a majesty he rears his looks : " ²

and then, with the quickness of thought . . .

" Forsake thy King and do but joine with me " ³

¹ *L. 324-5.*

² *L. 360.*

³ *L. 367.*

(Tamburlaine has some of the defects of this temperament, too.) He cannot retreat fighting and can offer only sullen obstinacy against Zenocrate's plea for Damascus. ~~He is as~~ inarticulate in love as he is eloquent in war, and his attitude to Zenocrate at what is presumably the crisis of their relationship, has to be indicated by a clumsy piece of stage by-play, which is perhaps only less clumsy than the words that Tamburlaine—or Marlowe—would have found. Yet his very ruthlessness, when he rises to the crest of a momentous action, has a certain sublimity—)

" Your fearfull minds are thicke and mistie then,
For there sits Death, there sits imperious Death." ¹

There is then a clear austerity about the character of Tamburlaine: he is not turned aside by any of the grosser temptations of his position; it is true to say that he is unaware of their existence. There are moments of deliberate relaxation when he sports with Bajazet, but he never lays aside his mastery of himself and of the situation, nor does any pleasure or subsidiary aim cloud his mind or come between him and the clear end of his ambition. He combines the force of Alexander with that steadfastness of vision that springs only from an inspiration, in its ultimate source religious. For all of this Marlowe had little or no suggestion except from his knowledge of his own heart:

" I will not spare these proud Egyptians,
Nor change my Martiall observations,
For all the wealth of Gelions golden waves,
Or for the love of *Venus*, would she leave
The angrie God of Armes, and lie with me." ²

After which it is not inconsistent that Tamburlaine should appear sometimes as a poet to whom the sources of poetry

¹ *Ll.* 1891-2.

² *Ll.* 1902-7.

and of ambition seem cunningly intermingled in that force which men call Beauty—

“ . . . mother to the Muses ; . . .
. . . With whose instincte the soul of man is toucht.”

(The Tamburlaine of the second part of the play is marked by a savageness, an ever-increasing extravagance, a lack at once of inspiration and of balance. The freakish, unrestrained moods of these later scenes have little or nothing to do with the glittering figure of the earlier part who spoke of the destiny of man :)

“ . . . To weare our selves and never rest, . . .
. . . Still climbing after knowledge infinite.”

These later qualities are the logical outcome of the situation that Marlowe created when he set out to write a ‘ second part ’ to the study of a character who can, by the very nature of his being, only have a first part. For Tamburlaine lives in the future and the essence of his spirit is the forward reach and the aspiration which must continue ‘ still climbing ’ if they are to live, and fail, even as Marlowe’s interpretation failed, when they reach ‘ the ripest fruit of all.’ There are certain instincts and desires at work in the mind that are so wholly things of the spirit that to pursue them into realisation and fulfilment is not within the power of human thought, not even for Christopher Marlowe. But having committed himself, there was only one thing for Marlowe to do ; to follow the decline and disintegration of that genius whose rise had been his original theme. So the second part contains the Nemesis whose very existence it was the triumph of the first part to deny.

Tamburlaine’s constant references to himself, in the second part, as the minister of the vengeance of God, somehow detract from his majesty and fall short of the sublime self-confidence of his youth. More and more he appears to be a crazy fanatic, less and less that strangely

inspired interpreter of the needs of the spirit. He is unbalanced now, rather than superhuman :)

“ And til by vision, or by speach I heare
Immortall Jove say, Cease, my *Tamburlaine*,
I will persist, a terrour to the world,”¹

Dignity and clearness of vision all go down before this increasing insanity, and it is Tamburlaine himself who alters, not the situations. The chariot drawn by the tributary kings is not essentially more extravagant than Bajazet in his cage ; it is the bearing of Tamburlaine that has lost its mastery and become frenzied. Chivalry has no place in such a character, and his treatment of the Governor of Babylon loses severely by comparison with the corresponding slaughter of the Damascan virgins in the first part. (To the end, though, Marlowe shows no clear appreciation of the finer shades of relationship between a man and his fellows and Tamburlaine’s defect here is but the result of the absence of this grace. . . .) (The Tamburlaine of the second part has sunk down to an oriental despot, savage, extravagant, half insane ; a type of which history furnishes enough records and for the creating of which none of the high instincts are needed that produced the original idea of the play. Yet to the end some flashes of the old quality recur, and one of Tamburlaine’s last phrases speaks of ‘Thoughts, as pure and fiery as Phyteus’ beams.’)

When we look at the other characters of the double play we find that a few of them repay close examination. The two best have a startling and almost disproportionate interest, they are sympathetic studies which isolate two of the background figures—Mycetes in the first part and Calyphas in the second.

Mycetes may be an imbecile but he, like Calyphas, says some remarkably good things, and both say them in a tone which detaches itself from the rest of the performance

¹ *Ll.* 3873-5.

and stands out in a different key. Marlowe manipulated Theridamas, Techelles 'and the rest' as he expressively calls them, because they had to fill in certain portions of the play ; for some reason he knew what was passing in the minds of Mycetes and Calyphas and let them talk, even irrelevantly, not because he wanted them to fill out the play, but because they had some kind of passport to his sympathy.

Part of Mycetes we meet again in *Edward II*, and certain of his phrases and turns of thought have the very note of Shakespeare's *Richard II*. He is addicted to exuberant and irrelevant imagery, some of it, such as the picture of the bloodstained ankles of his white horses, singularly beautiful, even if slightly perverted. He is also gifted with flashes of significant thought, which have no counterpart in the moods of the other persons or in the theme of the play. There is a faint, tremulous melancholy about him, such as invades the minds of low-spirited men, and it is a relief to find Marlowe—who shows himself, in *Tamburlaine*, unconscious of much that did not bear upon his high adventure—capable of entering wholly into this state of mind :

" Returne with speed, . . . "

[The speech would sit well upon Richard the Second, but is curiously out of place in this Persia.]

" . . . time passeth swift away,
Our life is fraile, and we may die to day." ¹

Even more delicately does Marlowe touch the hysterical collapse of the Persian king upon the battlefield :

" Accurst be he that first invented war,
They knew not, ah, they knew not simple men,
How those were hit by pelting Cannon shot,
Stand staggering like a quivering Aspen leafe, . . ." ²

¹ *Ll.* 75-6.

² *Ll.* 664-7.

Such touches as these constitute a rare counterpoint to the great predominant theme of Marlowe's writing, and a clue to his mind's development may be found in watching these subordinate tones gradually increase in number and significance until, in *Edward II*, the pale cast of thought subdues the whole play.

Calyphas is a bolder study, but he also contributes elements that have nothing to do with the tone or conduct of the play, and the two episodes in which he figures seem to be included mainly that he may speak his mind. And his criticism is worth hearing, though perhaps it is dangerous in such a drama to let the light of so frank and sane a judgment play upon the situation. For Calyphas comes very near persuading us that he is the only sane man in a group of madmen, or that Marlowe had had a sudden movement of impatience with the absurdity of his conception and had joined the audience in laughing at his chief characters. However it comes about, Calyphas seems to have been born a humorist. (We are prepared to find him the only member of his family in which any trace of this quality appears.) It is small wonder, then, that he did not always see eye to eye with them, or they with him. He offers to cleave the skull of the Turkish deputy, provided someone will hold him in the meantime—an offer which there was unfortunately no one to appreciate in the Persian court, least of all Tamburlaine himself. His dealing with his brothers is masterly, and again, coming from Marlowe, unexpected. But there is no denying the sure, if momentary, control of the sources of irony :

" Goe, goe, tall stripling, fight you for us both,
And take my other toward brother here,
For person like to proove a second *Mars*,
Twill please my mind as wel to heare both you
Have won a heape of honor in the field,
And left your slender carkasses behind,
As if I lay with you for company." ¹

Zenocrate, on the other hand, presents a more elusive surface than do any of the chief characters. She is talked about, but she very seldom talks—or very seldom to the point. She tells Agydas that she loves Tamburlaine, yet little personality is revealed by her colourless phrases. At Tamburlaine's orders she embarks upon a 'flyting' match with Zabina and continues to obscure her identity with equal skill. Twice only does she seem to speak as Zenocrate and not as the mouthpiece of some other agent: while waiting for the fall of Damascus and on her deathbed. In the first she is full of terrors for Tamburlaine, terrors that are themselves significant of Marlowe's imagination and that help to give perspective to the scene:

" Ah *Tamburlaine*, my love, sweet *Tamburlaine*,
That fights for Scepters and for slippery crownes . . .
. . . Ah, myghty *Jove* and holy *Mahomet*,
Pardon my Love, oh pardon his contempt,
Of earthly fortune, and respect of pitie,"¹

There is a certain gentle, conventional piety about her attitude which shows understanding on Marlowe's part, and the whole speech is a fine ode on the theme "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

And the deathbed speeches bear this out: she takes leave of her husband, of her sons and of the surrounding friends; she ends with pious advice to her children to follow in their father's footsteps, and leaves life with the hope "to meet your highnesse in the heavens." As far as Zenocrate is anything at all she is a virtuous, god-fearing Elizabethan matron, and may well bear some resemblance to Catherine Marlowe, the shoemaker's wife of Canterbury, who must, at this stage of Marlowe's life, have been the only woman with whom he had been brought into close and daily contact.

✓ The figures that move to and fro behind these main characters, filling out the needs of the story with colour,

¹ *Ll. 2137-47 passim.*

rhetoric and slender characterisation, are harder to differentiate. The slight conception of his minor figures with which Marlowe began his plays was not always enough to carry him through five acts, and instead of developing fresh suggestions as he handled it, it seems to have worn thinner. Theridamas in this way gives a faint promise of personality in his earliest scenes, but the promise is never fulfilled. The rest, distinguished only by their names, combine to form a harmonious and shadowy background like the figures of a bas-relief or the design on a Greek vase. The scenes with Bajazet show to an extraordinary degree this emptiness of personality. Bajazet, surrounded by his court, has an irresistible likeness to the king in a Christmas pantomime, and withal is as delightfully explicit and prone to instructive descriptions of his rank, power, virtues and intentions. There are passages when he is talking to the Kings of Fez and Morocco—both alone and in the presence of Tamburlaine—that read like a parody, though we may be assured no purpose was further from Marlowe's mind. Nor does his adversity become him better. He has no better weapon at command than vituperation which is of a piece with his former boasting, while Theridamas, Usumcasane and Techelles fill out the rôles of children drawing the attention of their schoolmaster to fresh signs of wickedness on the part of the one that is already in disgrace. At the end Marlowe attempts to invest this grotesque figure with some dignity, and forces his imagination into action, but even so the participation in Bajazet's emotions is the outcome of a deliberate effort, which brings together the elements proper to such a passion but does not necessarily subject the poet to it. Bajazet's death speech, for all its panoply of tempests and clouds, is not spontaneous and has more than a hint of labour.

In a medley such as this it is hard to trace any underlying structure. *Tamburlaine*, so far from interpreting life by indicating its form, appears as formless and incoherent as life itself. The first part, in this, errs less than

the second, but even the first has no progress, crisis or solution.) The final triumph and marriage of Tamburlaine is perhaps a climax, but it is too long deferred to have a direct connection with the original impulse, and the idea has been anticipated and handled so often that it has lost its freshness. Tamburlaine's rise to power cannot fill five acts of a play without complications, and a complication would be a denial of the very nature of Tamburlaine's genius, which triumphs, not after a struggle, but without it. Thus, before his play was begun, Marlowe had committed himself to a theme that was in its essence undramatic. It is a foregone conclusion, then, that there will be no dramatic form. In the second part of the play where the original impulse is gone, the difficulty of giving any appearance of structural unity increases enormously. Not only is this part episodic and filled with wholly irrelevant matter, such as the story of Olympia and Tamburlaine's speech on fortification, or with events that are only partly relevant such as the career of Calyphas, but the very theme itself is structurally incapable of sustaining interest. It is obvious that, of all the emotions that may be roused in an audience by the action of a play, almost the only one possible to the plot of *Tamburlaine* is surprise, an emotion that can only be evoked to a limited degree. The audience is in a state of suspense during the earliest acts of the double play, and suspense gives way to amazement as triumph follows triumph. As soon as the point is reached at which there is no longer any uncertainty in the mind of the audience—that is, as soon as repetition of the triumph has made the situation familiar and caused it to be expected, there is no more suspense. There are, in point of fact, about two more acts, but they have to be helped out with Bajazet and the Virgins of Damascus—episodes which are irrelevant to the too simple original theme.

Now the second part suffers a little all through from this disability. Tamburlaine's career of conquest con-

tinues, without the suspense or the zest that accompanied it in the first three acts. There is much talk of the magnitude of the armies that come against him, but there is no reaction when the triumph follows, because there is no surprise. Surprise is created in such an action as this not by the nature of the events themselves which are all too similar, or by the fact that each one is a little more impressive than the one before, but by each one advancing upon the one before to a degree that outruns the anticipations of the audience. This works clearly enough when Tamburlaine, from being commander of a handful of shepherds, leaps to the head of Theridamas's thousand horse. This is unexpected, and surprise, interest and anticipation are created. From this Tamburlaine becomes the victorious field-marshall of the Persian forces: again, an advance relatively greater than the former and outrunning that degree of expectation which had been created by the first. The difficulty with the second part—before Marlowe ever began to write it—was that this standard of advances could not be maintained, and anything that fell short of it was doomed to forfeit interest and to force the poet upon meretricious—and not always successful—devices for holding the attention. Marlowe's error is really a very simple mathematical one; the rise of Tamburlaine's career throughout the second part could be practically formulated as an arithmetical progression, whereas that of the first part has the more rapid rise of a geometrical progression, and it is this last formula alone which can be relied upon to outrun the anticipations of an audience and create surprise and interest. Looking at Tamburlaine's position at the beginning of the second part in the light of this, it is obvious that nothing short of that war against the gods which he himself speaks of would have been a fit climax to a sequence so begun. . . . It is just possible that Marlowe himself perceived this and that the madness that destroyed Tamburlaine is the vengeance of the heavens that he attacked.

But other expressions of the idea of form are possible though not proper to drama, and it is for signs of these that we must look ; for Marlowe had, from the beginning, a fine instinct for the formal quality of an idea.

In the details of form in *Tamburlaine*, this is clear enough, for Marlowe tends always to shape his speeches as lyrics or as odes, by the use of a reiterated line or by deliberate repetition and development of theme. This is revealed at its best in Tamburlaine's speech by the death-bed of Zenocrate (a speech in which, moreover, the formal value of the colour images subordinates the human emotion to the decorative design). But this is not the only case, and Zenocrate, Orcanes, Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane all use this device with rhetorical or with lyric effect. In this way, work distantly suggestive of that of the Greek chorus is done by some of the minor characters. Marlowe can, again, mould a speech exquisitely upon a rhetorical description, an argument or the expression of a single passion. There is, thus, fineness of line about isolated details of this design. But, more than this, Marlowe has an instinctive understanding of the severe austerity of decorative art and something of its quality is always present in the background of his play, in the grouping of his figures and in the apportioning of his speeches. This is finely illustrated in the scene in which Theridamas, Usumcasane and Techelles lament over the approaching death of Tamburlaine. The scene contributes little that is of value at such a stage in a play, and is, therefore, perhaps undramatic. But the whole passage with its reiterated lines and interwoven themes, its words that are half song and that seem inevitable to reproduce themselves in pose and movement, admits of exquisite staging in a conventional form modelled on the groupings of an Etruscan frieze or a Greek vase. It becomes more and more clear that in most of the grouped scenes of *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe saw neither a realistic picture of the historical figures (which would have been impossible) nor the final result of the setting

upon the Elizabethan stage. I think his intense power of vision provided him with a picture which often had nothing to do with either of these and that this vision had a tendency to conform to the structural demands of the plastic arts rather than to those of drama. *Tamburlaine*, viewed as one might view a strip of design from a Greek vase, appears to be ordered with a certain intermittent harmoniousness of form, giving unity to that background before which moves the dominant figure of Tamburlaine.

CHAPTER IV

TAMBURLAINE (*contd.*)

IT happens sooner or later to every reader of *Tamburlaine* to feel, for a time at least, that the play is little more than a series of images, all relevant to the dominant emotions (though by no means always to their immediate setting), all startling and arresting at the first glance, and yet leaving the reader in the end with a feeling of vague dissatisfaction, to look elsewhere for the secret of Marlowe's poetry.)

One group of these images forms a kind of accompaniment to the personality of Tamburlaine ; it is full of barbaric wealth and metallic splendour, clamorous with the noise of arms and trumpets, and vivid with blood. Above all it is brilliant, with the hard, blatant lustre of gold and jewels, whose names and colours seem to echo the clang and fanfare of military music. Marlowe uses their resources to bring before us the objects and the themes upon which Tamburlaine's mind dwelt :

“ Their plumed helmes are wrought with beaten golde.
 Their swords enameld, and about their neckes
 Hangs massie chaines of golde . . . ¹
 And with our Sun-bright armour as we march,
 Weel chase the Stars from heaven, and dim their eies
 That stand and muse . . . ²

There is a like instinctive propriety, too, in those gloomy images, redolent of Senecan horror, that begin to accompany Tamburlaine's progress through the later acts of the double drama. As the darkness of his temper grows deeper the “ furies of the black Cocytus lake ” wait upon

¹ *Ll.* 320-2.

² *Ll.* 620-2.

him with their attendant train of ghosts and Stygian snakes and pitchy clouds. (Like the imagery of Seneca, and yet true to Marlowe's dominant theme, it is sublime in its highest reaches) where Tamburlaine gives orders to—

“ . . . set blacke streamers in the firmament,
To signifie the slaughter of the Gods.” ¹

It is a relief to turn from this to another group of images through which he reveals his idea of Zenocrate, who brings with her the radiance of the “lamps of heaven,” the gleam of silver or crystal and the milk-white of ivory. She is like—

“ . . . *Flora* in her mornings pride
Shaking her silver tresses in the aire,” ²

And this radiance, welcome among the heavy colours of this barbaric play, is also an integral part of Tamburlaine's mind ; it is the reflection of his vision of Zenocrate, as are the others of his thirst “for sovereignty and love of arms.”

(Much has been made of Marlowe's love of colour and, for simple, strong tones, his instinct cannot be questioned. But it is only the simple and the strong tones that he dwells upon ; his is not a subtle colour-sense.) In all the range of both parts of *Tamburlaine* he speaks only of blood-red, black, gold, crystal, silver and milk-white. So startling and decorative are the effects that he achieves with these, that we forget at first there is no mention in the whole ten acts of the green of grass, of the blue of the sky, or the browns, greys and violets of the English landscape. Except for a dubious reference to sapphires (by which I suspect him to mean diamonds) there is nothing to indicate that Marlowe was not colour-blind to the whole range of the spectrum beyond red and yellow. (Too much allowance can hardly

¹ *Li.* 4441-2.

² *Li.* 1921-2.

be made for the deliberate choice of tones that suited his decorative scheme and for his valuing colour rather as a contribution to the form of his poem than for its intrinsic subtlety and beauty. But the fact remains that colour is not the fittest medium for the expression of Marlowe's thought and, though its fascination is not lost upon him, there is no sign of such response to the delicate interplay of tones as is revealed in any fifty lines of *Comus*. (Beside Milton's vast range of colour epithets Marlowe's take on a medieval simplicity. His finest *tours-de-force*, the 'white,' 'silver,' 'snow,' 'blood,' 'scarlet,' 'jet,' of Tamburlaine's tents, seem crude beside Milton's complicated tones: 'azure,' 'violet,' 'dusky,' 'silver,' 'saffron,' 'rose,' 'grey,' 'sooty,' 'yellow,' 'amber,' 'russet,' 'tawny,' 'Turkis blue' and 'emerald.'

This happens partly because Marlowe's images are often mainly decorative and ornamental. A few, even so, have rare beauty; though the best of them are not untinged with the artificiality of youth. Mycetes' horses with their milk-white legs fantastically splashed with crimson blood are a decorative detail. The same formal beauty is felt in the suddenly inserted line: "Brave horses bred on the white Tartarian hills." And when Tamburlaine says that he will—

"Batter the shining pallace of the Sun,
And shiver all the starry firmament:"¹

we have reached the highest splendour of purely decorative imagery. (But from that level Marlowe too often declines in *Tamburlaine*, and there is much that is not even effective rhetoric. In this case his images have little or no harmony with the emotions that form the background of the passage and serve rather to illustrate them than to echo their associations.) We miss the spontaneous harmony between the individual image and its setting that we feel when

¹ *Ll.* 3073-4.

Fortinbras cries, at the sight of the dead and dying Danish court,

" O, proud death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell . . . ? "

or when Banquo, on the night of Duncan's murder, feels that—

" . . . There's husbandry in Heaven,
Their candles are all out." . . .

Yet such imagery as that of Tamburlaine is not devoid of power, though it is most effective when it is cumulative, when one rhetorical picture leads on to another and the final impression is achieved by the weight of the whole rather than by the incisiveness of any one. Tamburlaine's description of his triumph in the last act of *Part I* is just such an effective, cumulative series of little pictures no one of which can be picked out as having the quality of poetry. Jove, the Furies, and Death are all there ; there are showers of blood, and meteors in Africa ; dead kings lie at Tamburlaine's feet, while on the banks of Styx are souls clamouring to be carried over to the land of shades. It is all there, but it has a tendency to find its way to the imagination through the reason—which is not the way of poetic imagery.

(Worse still, from this point of view, are those unassimilated allusions, astronomical, geographical, historical, mythological, in which Marlowe's knowledge is hardly subdued at all to the purposes of poetry.) His imagination has been overpowered by the material it worked in, and no transmutation has been achieved ; not even that partial conversion which gives the rhetorical imagery of the long 'set' speeches. Through both parts of the play, but more painfully in the second, we are stopped by inventories of persons and places and other (irrelevant) technicalities that stir no emotion in us and cannot ever have held magic associations even for Marlowe.) The number of these

proves, on careful view, astonishingly great. It will be enough to look at one case, and that of the 'name catalogue' is perhaps most suggestive because, in the first place, Marlowe is obviously doing his duty by a tradition that he inherited from Virgil, and because, in the second, he unfortunately challenges comparison with Shakespeare and with Milton who discovered, in this matter, a more excellent way.

It is immaterial which catalogue we take. There is a good one at the beginning of the third act, where Bajazet enumerates his own titles (surely unnecessarily?) to the emissary he is about to send to Persia. They are fine titles —at least as high-sounding as the 'Warwick and Talbot,' or the 'Morocco and Trebizon'd' of more lasting fame.

" Hie thee my Bassoe fast to *Persea*,
Tell him thy Lord the Turkish Emperour,
Dread Lord of *Affrike*, *Europe* and *Asia*,
Great King and conquerour of *Grecia*,
The Ocean, Terrene, and the cole-blacke sea,
The high and highest Monarke of the world, . . ." ¹

Why is it that there is no magic or emotional appeal here? The names may have been full of associations for Marlowe, but, if so, it is curious that they communicate nothing. For the magic that clings to proper names has nothing to do with associations in the mind of the reader and derives its power, in some mysterious way, only from the poignancy of its appeal to the mind of the poet. Most of us go down to our graves knowing nothing about Vallombrosa beyond the two lines which give us all our denotation of the name—and which we shall carry with us as long and as surely as we shall our indifference to all other associations of the word. And curiously enough, on the one occasion upon which Marlowe stumbled upon the secret, the name he immortalised had less previous significance even than Vallombrosa. Who but an antiquary could have found pathos

¹ *Ll.* 939-44.

or passion in the name Persepolis till Marlowe wrote the five lines that will live as long as any passage in his plays?

But for the most part I suspect that Marlowe was inclined to introduce names in the raw, straight from his note-books into the speech. They sound laboured, as if he were trying to carry conviction to himself and his readers. If he were a modern writer we should say that he was trying to convey an impression of local colour but that he had not yet learnt the alphabet of that branch of technique. [His mood seems logical and scientific rather than imaginative or poetic, and names, which roll through Milton's mind as phrases in the symphony of human history, refused to yield their secret to Marlowe.] And this is part of the strict justice of art, for what did Marlowe care for—

“ . . . What resounds
Of fable or romance of Uther's son,
Begirt with British or Armoric knights,
And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco or Morocco or Trebizonde,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia . . . ”

This incidental imagery, beautiful as it is at its best, only gives us the measure of part of Marlowe's poetry, for, as I have said (*Tamburlaine* is scattered with long passages of majestic description which, though they never rise to the first rank of poetry, have a power and impressiveness that is the highest reach of rhetoric and trembles continually upon the verge of poetry itself.)

The first of these is the picture which *Tamburlaine* unfolds to Zenocrate of her life as his empress. It is deliberate; a kind of inventory of the elements which ought to make up a striking picture: the swift steeds, the Median silk, the jewels, the ivory sledge and the frozen mountain-tops that dissolve at the sight of Zenocrate. Some of these “set” descriptions—such as that of the

tents (1421-35)—Marlowe moulds better than others. But always we feel the poet rousing himself and rallying his resources ; he is never swept away by the sudden uprush of emotion. It is the same with the description of Tamburlaine himself (461-84). We abandon the description as soon as we have read it, relying for our impression of Tamburlaine upon his own speeches, the direct expression of his mind. Perhaps we remember something of his "stature tall and straightly fashioned," of his "pale complexion" and the "knot of amber hair." But there is only one line that is indelibly written upon our memories, and it has nothing to do with what Tamburlaine looked like, nor is it in any sense an image. It is simply an idea—the idea of a mind "lift upward and divine."

The same might be said of other passages. Callapine's description of the kingly state in the first act of the Second Part (2519-44), one of the most picturesque passages in the play ; or the pompous gloom of the destruction of Larissa with its holocaust of flaming turrets, meteors, dragons, lightning and other natural phenomena leading inevitably to the Furies, Lethe and Styx. There is even a fine apocalyptic quality about this, a quality that Marlowe's heavier work is already beginning to show. In Theridamas's description of Tamburlaine (3457-78) much that has already been said is again borne out. We can feel the machine getting to work ; that it is a powerful machine and works splendidly does not alter the fact that the result is a product, not a growth. Moreover, the crude material horrors which he tries to use here were never, for Marlowe, the gateway to terror or pity as they were for Seneca and Kyd ; it was not from the picture of blood and slaughter that he was to evoke either emotion. And when all is said, this apparently remarkable speech contains little more than the unused materials that were discarded when, with truer inspiration, Marlowe wrote : "I hold the Fates fast bound in iron chains."

And this brings us to the conclusion to which a study of

the imagery of *Tamburlaine* inevitably leads, that the highest inspiration lies elsewhere and that the great poetry of these early plays is not poetry of imagery at all, but poetry of ideas. We forget the rhetoric and the fantastic decorative colouring when Tamburlaine speaks the language that came instinctively to Marlowe — the language of thought, not of the senses :

" Our soules, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous Architecture of the world :
And measure every wandring plannets course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And alwaies mooving as the restles Spheares,
Wils us to weare our selves and never rest, . . . " ¹

Here is the poetry of Marlowe's early years, not in the descriptions of the tents nor even in the apotheosis of Zenocrate.

For it is lines such as these that we come upon a rare quality : that of emotion which is the outcome not of the experience of the senses, but of thought. Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley—whether they eventually outgrow it or not—begin by deriving their experience through the senses ; in their early years the sensuous is the dominant element in their poetry, and they are dependent upon their senses for their belief in beauty and in poetry itself. In Milton's early poetry there is perhaps a clearer revelation of fully-developed senses than in the poetry of any one other man. Milton sees ; he sees colour, form, movement, and he sees them all more clearly, with subtler differentiations than, apparently, Shakespeare himself. He hears, and he has left such a revelation of the appeal of music to the senses as cannot readily be paralleled in our literature :

" . . . Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running ;
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony . . . "

¹ *Ll.* 872-7.

Moreover, the early poems are full of the scents of balm and cassia and nard, of "rich distilled perfumes" and the "odorous breath of morn." He feels as if he had touched it, the quality of the 'spongy air' into which Comus flings his spells. He tastes nectar and ambrosia and distinguishes the rough rinds of fruits.

But Marlowe reveals in the whole range of *Tamburlaine*, only one of these faculties, that of vision, and of vision limited chiefly to colours of the simplest kind. It is true, there is an indefinite reference to "cassia, ambergris and myrrh" as there is to "speech more pleasant than sweet harmony." But the "heavenly quintessence" that the poets "still from their immortal flowers of poesy" is not a physical thing, and the cherubim that "sing and play before the King of Kings" yield a curiously vague harmony. "The God that tunes this music to our souls" is a noble line, and we may be tolerably certain that Marlowe heard the music of the spheres. But there are no indications to suggest that he had ears for any other.

With such limitation as this, then, what is the nature of Marlowe's poetry? Simply this. There is nothing vague about his thought or imagination, but he does not catch the high light of physical beauty upon the world he reveals. He sees it as clear in line and form as Milton, but where Milton pauses to caress the vision for its exquisiteness, as in the Vallombrosa passage, where he adds lingering image to image, Marlowe gives only a passing comment to that aspect and, before we realise it, has carried us on to the idea of which he finds physical beauty only a symbol. He begins to speak of Zenocrate like "Flora in her morning pride"; there is some dalliance with "silver tresses" and "resolvèd pearl" and then, swift as thought, the inevitable lift

"What is beauty? saith my sufferings then."

There follows in the next thirty lines one of the most

penetrating pieces of meditation upon this evasive theme that has ever been attempted by a poet. It is this quality in Marlowe's mind which, already in *Tamburlaine*, gives a curious chill, an austere effect, to a poetry which is, paradoxically, instinct with passion. Again and again we feel nearer to the reticence and simplicity of sculpture than to the expression of any other form of art.

In the early poetry of Milton, then, we have the 'yellow-skirted fays,' the spells of Comus and music that

" Dissolves him into ecstasies
And brings all Heaven before his eyes . . ."

And Shakespeare, too, hears a harmony that is very close to this :

" . . . As sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair."

so that

" . . . When love speaks, the voice of
all the Gods
Makes Heaven drowsy with the harmony."

Even Wordsworth is preoccupied with the torrent that haunted him "like a passion"; and Shelley himself gives more than half his rapture to the silver moonlight and the whirling spheres through which glides the "pearly and pellucid car" of Mab.

But these things have not much meaning for Marlowe; he is absorbed with the thought of

" Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous Architecture of the world : "

And it is the same with him all through. When rapture touches him he is, as to the language of the senses, speechless, except for an image or two. He cannot give direct utterance to an emotion or an impression made upon his

senses, because that is not the habit of his thought.) He may perhaps succeed in touching upon accompanying emotions or images, but it is in the world of the ideas that lie behind these outward forms that he moves familiarly, and in the almost mystic utterance of the spirit itself that his wealth lies. He is most himself when he strikes out a line such as "Like his desire, lift upwards and divine" but there is nothing concrete there, and it hardly borrows anything from the physical world. Even when in *Faustus*, he tries to describe Helen, he cannot tell us what she looks like; he can speak only of the thousand Greek ships and the topless towers of Ilium; of the evening air and the stars.

... What does this tell us of Helen? Nothing—as Spenser or as Milton would have told us. (Marlowe can only speak as we imagine Homer himself, or Æschylus, would have done, giving no picture but only an undying record of that experience which is the eternal contemporary of mankind. This, as is the nature of that which is born of the spirit, can only be imperfectly recorded in a language framed to meet the needs of men who dwell chiefly among concrete objects and sensuous experience. And so, whether it be with Æschylus or with Marlowe, this experience will find difficulty in expressing itself in concrete language, and will at best give us a few indirect phrases that are, to one man, meaningless, to another, the key to the profundities of the poet's mind. This, from the time of his earliest play, is Marlowe's use of language, for this was the rare and individual quality of his thought.)

The quality, then, which emerges most clearly from these two dramas is a rare simplicity. Marlowe's mind is single, direct, unconfused. Given his evaluation of the world's phenomena, his sense of proportion is unerring and his restraint severe. The idea of his play is so simple and self-contained that he is involved in continual danger in trying to make a drama out of it at all. His tendency in treating his people is to take from them precisely what he needs for the expression of his idea and to leave the rest of the

personality colourless and undefined. (There is no irrelevant interplay. He seems to have seen his play less as a drama than as a pageant or a fresco, a fresco which has more than a hint of the limpidity of, say, Puvis de Chavannes. In image and phrasing, for all their force, the same strictness may be found. Though there is more that is lyrical and rhetorical than dramatic in *Tamburlaine*, it is not true to say that his imagery is irrelevant or exuberant. To do this is to regard it in its relation to the conduct of the play, which was never Marlowe's main interest. In its relation to the central idea, to which all else is subsidiary, the imagery of *Tamburlaine* is, like the characterisation and in less degree the form, an interpretation of, or a contrasting background to, the genius of the central figure which it was Marlowe's sole purpose to reveal.

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notes

CHAPTER V

FAUSTUS

"The reward of sinne is death: that's hard."

[Before any detailed study of the ideas contained in *Faustus*, much less of the form of the play, can be attempted, the question of how much of the play is Marlowe's must be answered. We are met at the outset by as vicious a textual problem as any that has confronted a critic since the custom of losing the most significant parts of a man's work began. In few cases is the work upon which we depend for our knowledge of the crucial years of any writer's mental biography represented by a text so mangled. It is probable that little more than a third of the original text of *Faustus* survives. About 850 lines is probably a generous estimate of the Marlovian part of the extant text. Yet to these we owe many of our deepest impressions of the poet's thought. The textual problems of *Faustus* demand close and careful consideration, and it is upon the conclusion so arrived at that depends the text from which we work in drawing the wider conclusions as to Marlowe's thought, the nature of his art, and the scope of the play. The problem has been fully and clearly discussed by Mr. Simpson ("The 1604 text of Marlowe's Doctor *Faustus*" in *Essays and Studies* of the English Association, vol. VII), and the text which has been used as the basis of this chapter coincides almost entirely with the parts indicated by him.]

"Thinkst thou that I who saw the face of God,
And tasted the eternal joyes of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being depriv'd of everlasting blisse?"

(L. 313-16)

Mephisto
in hell

THESE lines, spoken by Mephistopheles near the beginning of the play, have the ring of intense feeling that characterises Marlowe's utterance when his deepest and most passionate experience is revealed. And the experience which these lines summarise is perhaps the greatest event in Marlowe's biography; from it the play of *Faustus* inevitably sprang. It matters little in what formula it is expressed; the tragedy indicated here is

as old as humanity and universal. Wherever civilisation has freed men from absorption in the means of material life and has left leisure for reflexion, there has followed, sooner or later, the need to interpret or explain the universe and the meaning of man's being. For the possession of this understanding is the next vital thing after man's daily bread. It may be arrived at by thought and reasoning for one man, and for another exist rather as a sense of harmony drawn in with the air he breathes, unformulated, yet in fact the vital principle of his life. It is the loss, then, of this sense of unity, of this harmony between his mind and the universal forces surrounding him, which is the essence of spiritual tragedy, and it is of a loss of this kind that *Faustus* is the record. We feel in this play that the protagonist (and the poet himself whom he so closely shadows) has lost his sense of secure contact; his lines of communication are broken. The central idea of the play is an idea of loss. Marlowe does not tell us precisely what this is, for the plain reason that he did not know. The catastrophe is too recent; *Faustus* is written hard upon the heels of the event. But the passionate agony of the play is an agony of loss and it finds a fitting form for its expression in the medieval idea of a lost soul. Beyond this clear, transcendent passion of regret and despair, this realisation that "All places shall be hell that is not heaven," all is confusion. And this again is natural, for the poet, in a bewildering chaos of conflicting emotions, is searching for the meaning of the calamity that has befallen him. He offers in *Faustus* a series of explanations, some of which seem, in the light of his earlier and of his later work, to be the true ones, some of which contradict these and are a kind of apostasy in which Marlowe denies his fundamental creed. Most deeply of all he resents and blames that servitude to the dry and barren learning which he rightly perceives has led him somehow astray, though the error is too complete for him to see what it is that he should have followed in its stead or, even, at this stage, to hope for a

on demand of one's religion

recovery of the way. This he expresses very truly as the loss of the soul—the cutting off of the personality from its natural sources of inspiration and of faith. What these sources were, he does not know and cannot tell us; only, of the loss there is no question; the pain reveals the presence of disease, but does not diagnose it. In his further attempts at diagnosis he, as often as not, gives what must have appeared to him later as an altogether wrong explanation: he accepts, with a half-cowed and sometimes almost frantic submission, the conventional idea that it is his rejection of the superstitions of his contemporaries that has ruined him. It is here, I think, that there is apostasy.

When he presents Faustus growing desperate as he realises the barrenness of the learning upon which the best years of his life have been spent, or exclaiming: "Would I had never seen *Wertenberge*, never read booke": it is consistent with the Marlowe of *Tamburlaine* and of *Hero and Leander*, and we understand the tragedy implied. When, however, he numbers among the wiles of Mephistopheles, the destroyer, the beautiful vision of Helen and that "sweet pleasure" that "conquered deep despair," he is denying the two truest elements in his own nature, an instinct for beauty so fine that it trembles upon the very borders between the sensuous and the spiritual, and a ruthless, scientific honesty of thought and devotion to truth that mark his nature as profoundly religious.

Faustus, the great scholar of Würtemberg, reveals in his first speech the mind of a man who has gained enough knowledge and spent years enough in thought to realise that knowledge and philosophy leave him still unsatisfied. The predominant mood of the first scene is that of a man who awakes from a dream of mountain-tops to find himself still in the plains, or of a man who, having reached the mountain-top, is more than ever oppressed by his earth-bound nature and by the mocking distance of the skies towards which he had seemed to be climbing: "Yet art

thou still but *Faustus*, and a man!" For *Faustus* has never accepted the conditions of his human nature; the object of all his studies has been to transcend them, and each branch of medieval learning—logic, physic, law, divinity—as it comes up in its turn for review, is rejected because he sees that its highest reach falls short of that infinity for which he craves with an unformulated desire. Surveying his experience—a lifetime spent in the endeavour to make reason adequate to infinity—he dismisses his past labour as a delusion. He does not impute his failure to the limitations of his spirit, but to the limitation of the methods by which he has pursued his end:

✓ "Philosophy is odious and obscure,
Both Law and Phisicke are for pettie wits,
Divinitie is basest of the three . . ."¹

Partly in the recklessness which is the natural reaction from his former patience, partly in the desire for consolation, he abandons the systematic search for that final understanding—the desire for which has led him forward, yet eluded him, all his life, and plunges defiantly into the practice of magic. With the aid of Cornelius and Valdes he summons Mephistopheles, who opens for him the world of Black Magic, and offers yet another means of delusion, perhaps the only one which still has power to distract him. *Faustus* readily promises to give his soul for the power to command Mephistopheles and control elemental spirits for twenty-four years. Yet the futility of this final aberration is revealed in the very scene in which the promise is made. The first thing which *Faustus* asks of Mephistopheles is knowledge—that very knowledge upon which he had apparently turned his back. "Tell me," he begins. "What is that *Lucifer* thy Lord? . . . Where are you damn'd? . . . How comes it then that thou art out of hel?" In the next scene he would have a book

to tell him of the movements of all planets and another of all plants that grow on the earth. Faustus is dazzled by the material power that Magic puts into his hands, and dreams of being "great Emperor of the world" and walling all Germany with brass; but from time to time, like a deep undertone, is heard that desire which has moved him all his life, which Mephistopheles cannot satisfy:

Faustus : . . . tell me who made the world?

Meph : . . . I will not

Faustus : Sweete Mephistophilus, tell me.

Meph : Move me not, for I will not tell thee.¹

By this time it is clear that Magic will bring him no nearer to the understanding he desires than did the laborious pursuit of Knowledge, and that Faustus is in the grip of yet another and more ironic delusion. For the rest of his life his mind is in ever-increasing conflict; his evil angel and the potentates of Hell urge him on, by alternate threats and seductions, in courses that lead him more and more deeply into their power, while in moments of agonised reaction his good angel stirs in him contrition almost immediately overwhelmed by despair. These alternating moods continue, with increasing violence, up to the last scene; a macabre and sombre series of contradictory passions: triumph, mirth, terror, repentance, despair and recklessness, until Faustus is beyond repentance, beyond salvation, and looks back over his last delusion with clear eyes for a moment before terror blots out all other emotions and all thought. It is a profoundly significant story, whatever interpretation we assume to lie behind the symbols.

Out of such conflict of emotion and thought the great fragment of *Faustus* is produced. It is the battleground of the forces more or less spontaneously at work in *Tamburlaine*, and of those hitherto obscure, but easily imagined habits of mind and thought inculcated by the bitter years

¹ *LL.* 678-81.

of tutelage to an empty and unreal mental discipline, What was the natural bent of Marlowe's mind in his early years we may see in the rhapsodic, lyrical passages of his first play; (of the perversion of that mind under the influence of contemporary scholarism and theological dogma we have no record beyond the bitter attacks on Christians in *Tamburlaine*, until we come to the picture of catastrophe and confusion in *Faustus*. *Faustus* remains, then, an almost unmatched record of spiritual tragedy in a medium capable of isolating the spiritual elements and preserving them unmixed with any of the other elements of life.) The play reflects constantly back to *Tamburlaine*, and we, viewing it, may look constantly on to *Hero and Leander*; to the poetic aspiration of the one and the sensuous security of the other it is related by isolated outcrops, the invocation to Helen and such lines as :

“ Have not I made blinde *Homer* sing to me
Of *Alexanders* love and *Enons* death,
And hath not he that built the walles of *Thebes*,
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp
Made musicke with my *Mephistophilis*? ”¹

Tamburlaine was a young man's vision : “ We may become immortal like the gods ” *Faustus* is an intense and passionate expression of the despair that follows upon the clouding-over of the vision of “ the face of God,” whose loss made all places hell. And so perhaps our second impression of *Faustus*, after that of the clear, uncomplicated passion of loss, is of a purely negative play, which is often only a denial or condemnation of the aspirations of *Tamburlaine*:

Faustus : Tell me what is that *Lucifer* thy Lord ?
Meph : Arch-regent and commaunder of all spirits.
Faustus : Was not that *Lucifer* an Angell once ?
Meph : Yes *Faustus*, and most dearely lov'd of God.
Faustus : How comes it then that he is prince of divels ?

¹ *J.L.* 637-41.

Meph : O by aspiring pride and insolence,
For which God threw him from the face of heaven.

Faustus : And what are you that live with *Lucifer* ?

Meph : Unhappy spirits that fell with *Lucifer*,
Conspir'd against our God with *Lucifer* ;
And are for ever damnd with *Lucifer*.

Faustus : Where are you damn'd ?

Meph : In hell.

Faustus : How comes it then that thou art out of hel ?

Meph : Why this is hel, nor am I out of it: . . .¹

(This is reaction, a withdrawal from his boldest thoughts, a retreat upon conventional interpretations, which, being once left behind and abandoned, will no longer shelter him. And so the action of the play takes place in a kind of No-man's-land, between two armies of ideas to neither of which Marlowe wholly belongs. It is a faithful revelation of a mind in transition between two conceptions of the universe. As Faustus wavers between his good and evil angels, between God and the devil, so we may see Marlowe hesitating between the submissive acceptance of a dogmatic system and a pagan simplicity of outlook to which instinct and temperament prompted him.)

Faustus : " My hearts so hardned I cannot repent,
Scarse can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
But fearful echoes thunders in mine eares,
Faustus, thou art damn'd . . .
And long ere this I should have slaine my selfe,
Had not sweete pleasure conquerd deepe dispaire.
Have not I made blinde *Homer* sing to me
Of *Alexanders* love, and *Enons* death . . .
Why should I dye then, or basely dispaire ?
I am resolv'd *Faustus* shal nere repent."²

Yet in spite of this turmoil of ideas, the emotional quality of the play has a clarity almost unsurpassed in the range of the literature of passion. Since it was primarily the conflict of ideas that caused the suffering in Marlowe's mind, no amount of confusion here can do anything but heighten the tragic intensity of an action that takes place;

¹ *Ll. 298-312.*

² *Ll. 629-43 passim.*

as it were, on a plane above that of the intellect. (It is the peculiar nature of this play—arising, indeed, from the peculiar balance of faculties in Marlowe's mind—that it gives us a record of absolute emotion, hardly reached by any other work of art.) It is one of the everlasting paradoxes of art that an experience must be viewed from the outside before it can be formed into a work of art, but that, in so far as the poet does detach himself, in so far the intensity of the emotion diminishes. A battle, a shipwreck, a sandstorm in the desert is not a work of art. The experience has an intensity, an absoluteness beside which a work of art shrivels up and is meaningless. The aim of the tragic artist is to combine as nearly as possible this maximum of emotion which excludes the idea of art, with the degree of detachment necessary to give that form which distinguishes art from raw life. This approximation Marlowe has achieved in *Faustus* to an almost unparalleled degree. It seems, when we look back upon it, to have been created as nearly out of the heart of the experience and as nearly at the moment of sensation as it is possible for art to be. It is this that makes even the transmitted experience of the last scene almost unbearable.)

“ The starres moove stil, time runs, the clocke wil strike,
 The divel wil come, and Faustus must be damnd.
 O Ile leape up to my God : who pulles me downe ?
 See see where Christs blood streames in the firmament.
 One drop would save my soule, halfe a drop, ah my Christ.
 Ah rend not my heart for naming of my Christ,
 Yet wil I call on him : oh spare me *Lucifer* !
 Where is it now ? tis gone : And see where God
 Stretcheth out his arme, and bends his irefull browes :
 Mountaines and hilles, come, come, and fall on me,
 And hide me from the heavy wrath of God.
 No, no.
 Then wil I headlong runne into the earth :
 Earth gape. O no, it wil not harbour me :
 You starres that raignd at my nativitie,
 Whose influence hath alotted death and hel,
 Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist,
 Into the intrailes of yon labring cloude,
 That when you vomite foorth into the ayre,

My limbes may issue from your smoaky mouthes,
 So that my soule may but ascend to heaven :
 Ah, halfe the houre is past :
 Twil all be past anone :
 Oh God,
 If thou wilt not have mercy on my soule,
 Yet for Christs sake, whose bloud hath ransomd me,
 Impose some end to my incessant paine.
 Let Faustus live in hel a thousand yeeres,
 A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd."¹

When the old German story of the *Faustbuch* fell into Marlowe's hands it must have come with startling significance as the symbol of the conflict in progress in his own mind.] The story of the man who sells his soul to the devil is of undying vitality and can be made to comprehend the whole of human experience—as indeed Goethe came very near to making it.] The question with Marlowe is, then, what did he read into the formula thus offered him ?

Several suggestions may be made, perhaps none of them better than conjectures more or less wide of the mark. Yet, to the modern mind, much is suggested by the relationship between *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*. Behind the poetry of this first play there is apparent an instinct for abstract thought, strong enough to draw his attention away from any other theme, never quite strong enough to carry him clear of all other interests into the region of pure metaphysics. In process of time this results in a peculiar and highly individual attitude to life and Marlowe becomes preoccupied with man in his spiritual and intellectual aspects, taking no interest in the relations of man to man, or in the characteristics of individual men. Thus he came to concentrate more and more upon that intense inner life, so that the only things that had the power to touch him belonged to the world of thought. It was from this world therefore that the catastrophe of his early life came upon him. It was a tragedy of the mind, such as befalls a Carlyle or a Goethe, all independent of external circumstances. Marlowe had been bred a scholar and a theologian

and was of a profoundly religious temperament. Though he had refused to take the Church for his profession and had scoffed at it bitterly enough in *Tamburlaine*, this rejection had gone no further than to the dogmatic system of the Christian religion which Marlowe saw around him in a debased form. It is one thing for a man to reject his generation's interpretation of a particular religion but another to find himself suddenly robbed of faith in those fundamental notions upon which religion in general—and so life, purpose, hope—is built. This is the moment of terror, confusion and desolation, when the horror and meaninglessness of the jumbled elements of the world bring the mind to the verge of madness. "Nothing is but what is not," and the scene upon which the exhausted imagination looks out is like that of a country devastated by flood or earthquake. All the known landmarks are down; nothing appears from horizon to horizon but wreckage and a still shifting, unstable surface in which no fixed point can be found and no distance measured.

It was, for Carlyle, the perception of an everlasting 'No.' For Marlowe it was the sense of something lost that can never be regained, of the significance gone from the heart of life, taking purpose and hope with it. And because he was trained in the theological dogma of his day he used its terminology, and turning back to find wherein the cause lay, fastened upon the "aspiring pride and insolence" and related the whole story under the symbolism of the old German legend of the scholar who lost his soul through seeking to know "more than heavenly power permits." The play, then, is an attempt to give a faithful portrait of this condition of mind and, at the same time, a comment upon it. The feelings and thoughts of Faustus furnish the one; the conduct of the action and his catastrophic fate, the other. The intrinsic worth of the play lies almost wholly in the first, for the significance of which it is hard to find fit words. But Marlowe's comment upon Faustus's career is rich in autobiographical

suggestion and affords a rare revelation of a mind in reaction against its own former boldness, of a high spirit temporarily shaken into abjectness by spiritual fear.

In the opening scene of the play, where Faustus, sitting in his study, surveys the sum of his ideas and of his achievements, we meet a man who has reached a pausing place in life. He has been sustained by an aspiration, undefined but powerful which has been forced into a certain way of thought until the moment comes when he looks for the idea that first animated him and can no longer perceive it; nor can he at first understand why he has lost it. It is time for a revision of the situation; Faustus must 'settle' his studies and look over the stock of his mind. For the first time he is dimly conscious that the ground is not secure beneath him and that it behoves him to consider how sure are the foundations of those "professions" upon which he has built up his faith, career and reputation.

He despatches the practical aspect of the situation in one reach of thought. It is easy enough to be a divine in show. But the question what he professes within his own mind still confronts him as it confronts every honest man at least once, and some not once, nor twice, but continually throughout their lives. The first answer that occurs is, that Faustus has 'taken all knowledge to be his province,' that he will 'level at the end of every art,' in other words that he, like Bacon after him, will contemplate the ends, the purposes and the relationships of all forms of knowledge, that he is a native of that country where sciences become Science, where departments of knowledge become Knowledge:—

Faustus. "Settle thy studies *Faustus*, and beginne
To sound the deapth of that thou wilt professe:
Having commencde, be a Divine in shew,
Yet levell at the end of every Art,
And live and die in *Aristotles* workes:—" ¹

¹ *LL.* 29-33.

In pursuit of this idea he turns to consider Philosophy or Logic. There is enough in Aristotle's thought for a man to spend his life in its contemplation. In the *Analytics* he had imagined for a time that he found an expression of his inspiration. What is the "end" of this art? Where and how does it become universal knowledge?

"Is to dispute well, Logickes chiefest end,
Affoords this Art no greater myracle?
Then reade no more, thou hast attaind the end;
A greater subject fitteth *Faustus* wit; . . ."¹

There is something limited and futile in that. It will not lift man far. The earlier vision of infinite possibility here must have been a delusion or a mistake. There is nothing in deductive logic to warrant the idea that through it man may touch infinity.

Faustus must have a wider range for his thought; this is circumscribed and slavish. What of medicine?

"Seeing, *ubi desinit philosophus, ibi incipit medicus*.
Be a physition *Faustus*, heape up golde,
And be eternizde for some wondrous cure."²

There is opportunity of discovery there that stretches out to unlimited possibility. The experimental scientist, the inductive thinker, begins where the formalist, the pure logician, leaves off. Besides, in this art there is worldly glory and wealth to be won.

So much for its nature and practical application. But at what point does this form of knowledge touch absolute knowledge? What is its highest reach?

"*Summum bonum medicinæ sanitas*,
The end of physicke is our bodies health:
Why *Faustus*, hast thou not attaind that end?
Is not thy common talke sound Aphorismes?
Are not thy billes hung up as monuments,

¹ *Ll.* 36-9.

² *Ll.* 41-3.

Whereby whole Citties have escapt the plague,
 And thousand desprate maladies beene easde,
 Yet art thou still but *Faustus*, and a man.
 Couldst thou make men to live eternally?
 Or being dead, raise them to life againe?
 Then this profession were to be esteemd.
 Physicke, farewell, . . .”¹

Faustus has fame as a doctor, but what of that? Man's estate is in no way altered by his high achievements in this art. It leaves him but a man and others but men. There is no key to any profound secret there. If this art is of any dignity it should, in the hands of Faustus, yield up the secret of eternal life at least. So only could it show itself worthy of the passion and profundity of his question.

Faustus turns back again to the realm of the mind. Man's greatest dignity and triumph is in thought. And one of the highest concepts of this thought is the idea of Law. Here is Justinian's *Institute*:

“ *Si una eademque res legatur duobus,
 Alter-rem, alter valorem rei.*
 A pretty case of paltry legacies:
Exhaereditare filium non potest pater nisi :
 Such is the subject of the institute
 And universall body of the law:
 This study fittes a mercenary drudge,
 Who aims at nothing but externall trash;
 Too servile and illiberall for me:”²

Again, there is the particular for the general, the petty, concrete detail instead of the magic universal formula. There is no knowledge in these pedantic groupings of facts. There is no inward significance, only “outward trash.”

To find the great and universal concepts a man must turn to divinity after all:

“ When all is done, Divinitie is best.
Jeromes Bible, Faustus, view it well.
Stipendium peccati mors est : ha, Stipendium, &c.
 The reward of sinne is death: thats hard.
Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, et nulla est in nobis veritas.

¹ *Ll. 44-55.*

² *Ll. 56-64.*

If we say that we have no sinne,
 We deceive our selves, and theres no truth in us.
 Why then belike
 We must sinne, and so consequently die.
 I, we must die an everlasting death :
 What doctrine call you this, *Che sera, sera,*
 What wil be, shall be ? Divinitie, adieu, . . .¹

Yet there are the two horns of a dilemma. Each statement is irrefutable and the sum of them is death. This is no better than the syllogism that contained its conclusion in its major premise. Divinity, then, is no better than logic.

Finally, Faustus turns away from these barren sciences. There is no way there to absolute knowledge, no key to the secrets of the universe, no answer to patient investigation, thought and reasoning. Perhaps—

“ The oracles are dumb, or cheat
 Because they have no secret to express.”

Heaven may be more readily reached by letting the fancy range. There is a world of experience, of entertainment, of food for contemplation in the dreams of the old magicians. Seeing that there is no result from the arduous and honest search for truth, why not instead these pleasant, fantastic dreams ?

“ These Metaphisickes of Magicians,
 And Negromantike bookes are heavenly :
 Lines, circles, sceanes, letters, and characters :
 I, these are those that *Faustus* most desires.
 O what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honor, of omnipotence
 Is promised to the studious Artizan ?
 All things that moove betweene the quiet poles
 Shalbe at my commaund, Emperours and Kings
 Are but obeyd in their severall provinces :
 Nor can they raise the winde, or rend the cloudes :
 But his dominion that exceeds in this,
 Stretcheth as farre as doth the minde of man.
 A sound Magician is a mighty god : ”

These are fruitful metaphysics ; here is a heaven of suggestion. All that man could not reach by arduous thought lies here. Faustus will withdraw into this imagined world where the philosopher may at last reap his reward where " all things that move between the quiet poles " are in his power, and he may control everything that the mind of man can conceive. Here a man is, in imaginative creation, the equal of God.

The magic that Faustus practises is magic that has been practised since the beginning of the history of thought by those who have followed the wrong road, and, discovering it, have not known where to find the right. Knowledge and the pursuit of truth are hard, barren and often fruitless, if sought in the way that is not natural or spontaneous to the mind at work. So Marlowe found, so Faustus. But let a man once turn his back upon this effort, and the world of dreams is rich, entralling ; there a poor scholar may be Tamburlaine and conqueror of the world, surrounded by images of such splendour that the external world is dim as though seen through a veil, by echoes so triumphant that the voices of that world come muffled and as from a great distance. In his first discovery of this kingdom of the mind, man's pride ' dares God out of Heaven,' for is not he himself a god, as securely throned ?

The way into this country is, moreover, made peculiarly clear by the perception of the mockery of the conditions under which the game of life is played. For man's career, free though it appear, is only that of an animal in a trap, the conclusion prearranged. Marlowe's criticism of the life of man, in this play, rests upon the cruel and ironic paradox which is the climax of this speech. " The reward of sin is death. . . . If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," with the pitilessly logical deduction, " Why, then, belike man must sin and so die."

This, then, though it is by no means consistently adhered to, is an interpretation to which Marlowe refers. It is in this mood that the action is conceived. It is Marlowe's

verdict upon man's position as the plaything of the gods.

That side of Marlowe's mind which was logical, ruthless and scientific, which had been trained in gloomy theology and the Hebrew doctrine of retribution, was conscious of two laws. First, that sin is the cause of death ; or, rather, that sin is death of the spirit. Second, that sin is inherent in everything men do ; that day by day they are conscious of thought, act or attitude of mind that has dealt a blow at the life of the spirit. But here Marlowe seems to stop, with the conclusion, " Why, then, belike we must sin and so die." This is the point at which we might imagine the clear, penetrating intellect of a thoughtful Jew before the Christian era coming to a stand in the teachings of the Pharisaic Law to which Marlowe's theology was closely akin. It is a curious thing that the sound sense, the clarity, the reasonableness of the ideas of Christ never seem to have called a response from similar qualities in Marlowe's own mind. The explanation, perhaps, lies in that indifference to the emotion of love which distinguishes Marlowe's mind in all its processes and all its conclusions. It was impossible for him to see in the factor of love a force which could oppose sin and death with a reality greater than their own. To him it was presumably no more than a shadowy doctrine of the schools, dim and meaningless from wearisome repetition. Small wonder, then, that such a man, when he speaks of the soul and its struggle speaks with the finality and harshness of a Pharisee. And here his virtues are his enemies. The logical clearness, the passionate desire for truth, the unswerving courage of his mind, all play their part in hastening the conclusion. And the fitting result is that drama which takes for its theme the reflection : " The reward of sin is death. That's hard." There is no comment ; no effort to reject it or deny it. Hard it indeed is, and hard it remains. It is an unbending mind that can carry its thought through to such a conclusion and accept it. The infinite is above man, a standard which he can

never reach, failure to reach which nevertheless is its own pitiless punishment. Life is a game at which man must be caught out sooner or later because it is implicit in the rules of the game that he should fail sooner or later. The gulf between man's nature and his ideals is unbridgeable. The whole process is a gigantic intellectual cheat. The reason may hold out delusive hopes for a time, but the conclusion was implied in the major premise. Man is doomed before he begins. Here then, is Faustus's answer to Tamburlaine. It is to be found in the mood which initiates the action of the play :

" The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success ;
That all the oracles are dumb, or cheat,
Because they have no secret to express ;
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
Because there is no light beyond the curtain ;
That all is vanity and nothingness."

And while we listen to Marlowe, it is impossible to see an error in this picture. It is all true. It is complete and perfect within itself.

But the great creative thinkers have met the problem differently and we have Goethe's word delivered upon the same theme to lay beside Marlowe's. And what Goethe says is only part of what has been said by *Æschylus*, or Socrates, or Christ. The writer of *Faust* does not limit his world to a picture of man at death-grips with a scientific law of sin and retribution, inevitable in its workings and worshipped by him as God. True, the law is inevitable, but it is liable, like all laws, to modification by causes working outside it and enveloping it. It is the perception of these enveloping forces and the reinterpretation of the same fragment of life in the light of that perception, that is Goethe's comment upon Marlowe's statement. Just so does the idea of Christ envelop, not deny the law of sin and death, for if sin is death, love is life. But whereas Goethe announces this clearly, for Marlowe only the

first half of this truth was visible when he wrote *Faustus*.

Immediately from this arises the conception of God that we find in *Faustus*. There is no longer, as in *Tamburlaine*, a variety of suggestions behind the name. (God is always for Faustus the Hebrew law-giver, pitiless, just, mechanical and unimaginative.) Only once, in the mouth of Mephistopheles, is he referred to, as so often in *Tamburlaine*, as the spirit that pervades the universe and inspires the highest of man's faculties. ("I," says Mephistopheles, looking back upon the Marlowe of *Tamburlaine*, "who saw the Face of God. . . ." "I," that is "Whose mind was filled with vision and with aspiration. . . ." Apart from this single reference, Marlowe chooses the first formula and uses the word 'God' to stand for the law, as yet undefined by which sin is punished with spiritual death. The sin for which punishment is meted out to Faustus is more often alluded to than explained. The Old Man in the scene before the last gives a moving description—in purely general terms, however—of :

" . . . such flagitious crimes of hainous sinnes,
As no commiseration may expel." ¹

But he leaves us, nevertheless, wondering to what he is referring. Faustus, as far as we have been able to follow him, has been foolish and frivolous, but never criminal. Perhaps Marlowe knows too little of what is in the heart of man to give a convincing picture of sin. Perhaps, also, the words of the Old Man are merely symbols that have to be interpreted before we reach Marlowe's meaning. Elsewhere in the play, he says, plainly enough, that Lucifer's fall came about through 'aspiring pride and insolence,' and it is probable that Marlowe, looking back upon the high thoughts of *Tamburlaine*, sees in them that pride of mind that he describes as sin. He endows Faustus, then,

with similar qualities, letting them bring about his doom, a doom which furnishes a comment upon Tamburlaine no less than upon Faustus.

Underlying this, there is perhaps the further idea that is half revealed in the opening speech, the idea of the conflict between truth and delusion. Faustus abandons the search for truth because the road by which he is endeavouring to approach it is arduous and barren, letting himself sink into delusions which soothe and entertain him, but lead nowhere. This tragedy is eternal and some aspect of eternal truth must be the genesis of work written, as is *Faustus*, with the heart's blood of the poet. The form in which Marlowe tried to clothe this idea—the symbols of a dogmatic system in which angels and devils dispute for a man's soul, did not, perhaps fit it closely enough to let him express it clearly. As in *Tamburlaine*, the form tends to betray the idea rather than to elucidate it.

After all, all attempts to explain the cause of the state of mind so unerringly revealed in *Faustus* are of less importance than a realisation of the central truth which preoccupied Marlowe himself—the truth that, from one cause or another, catastrophe had overtaken his mind and that he felt himself cut off from the inspiration that had sustained him. Nothing is more unlikely than that a man, while still in the grip of such a catastrophe, could define the cause of it rightly ; beside the overwhelming power of the single idea, Marlowe's explanations and his references to sin and evil are insignificant, and would, undoubtedly, have been denied by him at the later and saner period of his life which saw the writing of *Hero and Leander*. At present, in *Faustus*, he is suffering a spiritual catastrophe and imputing his fall to sin. (Later, I imagine, when he ceased to impute it to sin, he probably saw clearly what he had dimly felt in *Faustus* : that his mind had been denied the things needful to its development and had been forced to submit itself to years of fruitless and unproductive

effort.) Later still he recovered part, at least, of what had been lost and wrote *Hero and Leander*.

But at the time of the writing of *Faustus*, this element is curiously misunderstood by the poet himself.) The spontaneous love of beauty, which had been clear in *Tamburlaine*, owes allegiance to no moral code; it springs into being unsolicited and irresponsible; it is powerful and yet unexplained. Faustus sees Helen of Troy and the thoughts of death and hell vanish. Sin is meaningless and the ministers of vengeance powerless. More than once, for Faustus, "sweet pleasure conquered deep despair," and the singing of blind Homer, the tale of "Alexander's love or Oenon's death" has made him laugh away the idea of repentance and "confound hell in Elysium." Some of the best of Marlowe is in this mood of Faustus. There is a serene confidence about these utterances, steadier than the raptures of *Tamburlaine*, and a certain sweetness which has more repose than the exaltations of the earlier play. But this quality only appears for an instant through the wreckage of hope and passion and then disappears, not to be seen again until it is revealed as the master quality of his mind in *Hero and Leander*. Faustus is at peace, not when he is bending his mind to the stern task of abstract thought and the contemplation of pure reason, not when he is allowing himself to be immersed in the delusions of Mephistopheles' magic, but when, looking at the face of Helen, he enters that pagan world to which his mind truly belonged.)

But unable in *Faustus* to follow or trust to these instincts, Marlowe draws back in fear from the irresponsible, unmoral quality of these emotions. He dare not be a law to himself, for that self he is only beginning to re-discover. He has not yet experienced mental freedom, though the desire for it has driven him into desperate terms. Now that the chains have fallen off, his nerve is broken, he would have them back again and is more afraid of the unknown freedom than of the familiar slavery. "The God thou

servest is thine own appetite," he exclaims and turns back.

Mephistopheles expresses a bolder mood when he says that Heaven is :

" . . . not halfe so faire as thou,
Or any man that breathes on earth." ¹

But upon the heels of this follows the thought : " I will renounce this magic and repent." Marlowe, in love with the beauty and the splendour of man, stops short out of momentary timidity when he might have found in the worship of the spirit of man, for which he was peculiarly framed, that divine element whose loss he mourned.

One idea, however, rises clear : Marlowe's picture of hell, that hell which " is not circumscribed in one self place," but is a state of mind, a man's outlook upon the world. Mephistopheles, who is also Marlowe, gives us the clue to it in his first description of hell.) The poet who " saw the face of God " now sees it no more. It is the world-old lament over clouded vision. Wordsworth stoically notes something " gone that nothing can restore " Virgil mourns, "*neque auras dispiciunt clausæ tenebris et carcere cæco.*" It is a sharp pain, this, that life keeps especially for poets and, in measure as a man is a poet, in such degree will the catastrophe seem final when it befalls him. More than ever was it bitter to Marlowe, for his poetry was, as we have seen in *Tamburlaine*, a poetry of ideas. His vision was literally a looking upon " the face of God." It is not, with him, the pansy at his feet that has lost its magic, nor the passions and joys of man that have decayed or flagged, it is that purer spiritual passion of idea which has in some way been contaminated.

The loss and isolation were probably intensified in Marlowe's case by the singleness of this youthful vision. The sphere of his passion had been limited in its scope if

¹ *LL.* 617-18.

exalted in its reach. He apparently loved neither earth nor man for themselves ; his dauntless soul had "tasted the eternal joys of heaven," which had left all other joys tasteless and all places "hell, which are not heaven." He possessed a rare combination of faculties to which alone such a catastrophe is possible, and he had developed apparently that habit of mind (not unknown to the severer mystics of the Catholic Church, such as St. Juan of the Cross) which assumes that man can only fulfil the will of his Creator by eliminating or by transcending his humanity.

(Through this tangle of ideas Marlowe cuts his way, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, his strength lying in his clarity, honesty and fearlessness of thought, his weakness in the limited field of his sympathies.) Had he understood more, or less, of what is in man, he would have escaped the bitterest part of his experience ; but (that very combination of clear single-mindedness and narrowness of outlook gave him the key to the catastrophe of *Faustus*.)

The form of *Faustus* is a little like that of all ruins—^{Design} the design is not obvious, but it can be perceived.) If the roof of a cathedral were broken in several places and patched with rococo work and frivolous, degenerate ornaments, no architect would be deceived. Rather, his first thought would take the form of Goethe's exclamation : "Wie gross ist alles angelegt!" The ribs of the original arches can be discerned, though their continuity is broken and their surface deformed. At a distance, the purposed design still gives an impression of balance, of proportion, of magnitude. So with *Faustus*, though Marlowe's action never appears continuously and the flow of his blank verse is broken even in the last scene.

We can trace six main episodes in the play, roughly equivalent to six acts, followed by a catastrophe. In the first scene, *Faustus* surveys his position and makes the choice that begins the action and sets the play moving

towards the crisis. In the next, he takes the first significant step and summons Mephistopheles as he had determined in the scene before. Still his mind is rising in its purpose and its desires. In the third great scene comes the crisis, the selling of his soul, with the vacillation attendant upon a crisis, leaving us uncertain which way the action will move. In the next scene of importance, Faustus's regrets begin and the evil powers double their efforts and triumph, so that the action, instead of swaying to and fro in balanced conflict, now sets downward. The two choruses and the next few scenes represent, as far as we can judge them, a period of quiescence during which Faustus exploits the resources of the universe. It is a period also of disintegration and of loss of ideals after the upward movement of the first three scenes; even the approach of the end fails to rouse him. The last struggle of the good forces fills the next scene where the Old Man pleads with Faustus as the two Angels had done in the first half, and where the forces of evil make their most strenuous effort and gain their final triumph. This period of contest ends, as did the first, with the signing of the bond, and the whole is sealed by the apparition of Helen. The fight is over now and the movement rushes down to the catastrophe of the last scene in which there is only suffering and no action.

In the first part of the play, then, Faustus's mind reaches out eagerly to the new worlds before him, in spite of an occasional check from the suggestions of the good angel. In the second part, his tendency is to react from this and to repent, but he is checked and dragged back unwillingly to ruinous courses by the same spirit that had urged him on in the first part.

Thus the battle is in two parts, with the triumph of evil sealed in each case by the signing (or confirming) of a bond. In the first, Faustus is brought at length to throw in his lot with the evil forces and loosen his hold on the good; in the second, he is brought to despair of the good

and so give himself over wholly to the evil. When the first has been accomplished the downward action sets in ; the catastrophe follows immediately upon the second.)

It is futile to conjecture too closely with a fragment like this as to the form of the original, two-thirds of which may have been lost. But these salient episodes have survived and may have been the main scenes of the original as they are of the present play. In any event, they make it clear that it is upon the figure of Faustus that such action as there is immediately depends.

The character of Faustus, it cannot be too often repeated, is not that of one man, but of man himself, of Everyman. There are no details, no personal traits, no eccentricities or habits, nothing that is intimate or individual. Marlowe could not have told us where, or in what way, Faustus differed from any other man. He was concerned only with that part of him which was common to all men, yet in virtue of which he exceeded all men, his mind. And that mind—we have met it already in an earlier play—is Marlowe's. The limitless desire, the unbridled passion for the infinite, a certain reckless, high confidence in the will and spirit of man are all there as before. ✓ Throughout the earlier scenes the mind of Faustus is still "lift upward and divine," still "climbing after knowledge infinite." There are in Faustus dignity, patience, tenacity and a certain profundity of thought that are not to be found in Tamburlaine :)

Faustus : What, is great *Mephistophilis* so passionate,
For being deprivd of the joyes of heaven ?
Learne thou of *Faustus* manly fortitude,
And scorne those joyes thou never shalt possesse.
Go beare those tidings to great *Lucifer*,
Seeing *Faustus* hath incurrd eternall death,
By desprate thoughts against *Joves* deitie :
Say, he surrenders up to him his soule,¹

Had I as many soules as there be starres,
Ide give them al for *Mephistophilis* :

¹ *Ll.* 319-26.

By him Ile be great Emproure of the world,
 And make a bridge through the mooving ayre,
 To passe the *Ocean* with a band of men,
 Ile joyne the hils that binde the *Affricke* shore,
 And make that country continent to *Spaine*,
 And both contributory to my crowne :
 The Emproure shal not live but by my leave,
 Nor any Potentate of *Germany* : ¹

(But these are only the attributes of Marlowe grown older.)
 This rare power of abstracting the nature of man, of
 revealing only the universal and the general, yet so reveal-
 ing it that it comes home to the heart of every individual
 man, reaches its height at the end of the play.

The broken prose speeches that pass between Faustus
 and the scholars before he is left alone, do indeed, for a
 moment, show more of normal human feeling than has
 been contained in all the preceding scenes, but they are
 eclipsed by the passions of the last scene so that they seem
 only the foil to it. For a while an unsuspected humanity
 and tenderness appear in Faustus, side by side with the
 resoluteness which never deserts him until his personality
 itself begins to disintegrate :

Faustus : Gentlemen away, lest you perish with me.
2nd Scholar : O, what shal we do to save Faustus ?
Faustus : Talke not of me, but save your selves, and de-
 part . . .
1st Scholar : . . . let us into the next roome, and there pray
 for him.
Faustus : I, pray for me, pray for me, and what noyse soever
 yee heare, come not unto me, for nothing can
 rescue me.
2nd Scholar : Pray thou, and we wil pray that God may have
 mercy upon thee.
Faustus : Gentlemen, farewell, if I live til morning, Ile visite
 you : if not, Faustus is gone to hel. ²

But this is only a fitful gleam, a momentary illumination
 of the world of common affections and loyalties, serving
 to throw into greater relief the isolation and the horror of

Faustus's position. It has the same value as the homely words spoken a few minutes before the murder of Duncan, when Macbeth, nerved to the deed with the horror of which the very air seems fraught, dismisses the servant in attendance :

" Go, bid thy mistress when my drink is ready
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed."

It is the last glance thrown back upon the normal world from the edge of hell.

Then Faustus is left alone in the room and he is reduced to the mere essence of man—to pure mind freed from all colour derived from human life. There are none of these objects, persons, or habits of life upon which the spirits of great tragic figures are allowed, in the hands of other dramatists, to cast strange, lingering illuminations in the very moment of death. Where Faustus stands, character and individuality no longer exist; there are no distinctions between man and man. In the final and all but inconceivable agony he becomes a sentient nucleus of nerves at the mercy of that terror which leaves him only the power to suffer and to exclaim against his suffering. There is no question any longer of self-reliance or of the preservation of any of the barriers that hold the personality together. For personality is dissolving under "a touch more rare" than has ever been portrayed in art, and we have only absolute and isolated passion, unmodified and uncontaminated by the influences which must confuse all others. The mind, upon the verge of dissolution, is given over to pure fear, absorbed by the inexpressible horror of the doom before it. A strange spiritual alchemy is at work; the soul itself disintegrates under our eyes. Marlowe follows Faustus further across the border line between consciousness and dissolution than do any of his contemporaries. With Shakespeare, with Webster, death is a sudden severing of life; their men die, conscious to the

last of some part at least of their surroundings, influenced, even upheld, by that consciousness and preserving the personality and characteristics they have possessed through life.) Macbeth dies fighting; Hamlet, commanding the Danish Kingdom to Fortinbras; Mark Antony, though alone and more cut off than either of these, looks on towards the moment when he will again join Cleopatra. Webster's villains in *The White Devil* are steadfast and consistent; both Flamineo and Vittoria survey and comment upon the past in the light of approaching death. In Marlowe's *Faustus* alone is all this set aside. He penetrates deeply into the experience of a mind isolated from the past, absorbed in the realisation of its own destruction.

In Marlowe's great tragic fragment the conflict is not between man and man for the domination of one character over another, or in the interaction of a group of characters. But, as in Æschylus's *Eumenides*, the protagonists are man and the spiritual powers that surround him, the scene is set in no spot upon the physical earth, but in the limitless regions of the mind, and the battle is fought, not for kingdoms or crowns, but upon the question of man's ultimate fate. Before him lies the possibility of escape to spiritual freedom or a doom of slavery to demoniac powers. Thus and in such terms is staged the greatest conflict that drama has ever undertaken to present.

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CHAPTER VI

THE PLAYS OF POLICY—I

THE JEW OF MALTA

"Not unbefitting men who strove with Gods."

THE prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, spoken by Machiavelli, is more than the prologue to a single play: it introduces a new phase of Marlowe's work and is the brief epitome of a philosophy of life and state-craft that he was to consider and re-consider and upon which his next five plays¹ were to furnish forth comments, now from one point of view, now from another. It sums up the main motives of Barabas, though the principles of Machiavelli do not entirely contain him, nor he them; it represents very fairly the Guise and Richard of York,² though both fall a little short of it in imagination and poetry; its spirit reappears in part in the younger Mortimer, though he is often but a mechanical exponent of its forces. The dominant figures of all these plays are, in one way or another, to greater or less degree, representatives of those methods and principles which, to Marlowe and his contemporaries, went under the name of Machiavellianism.

Marlowe probably understood these principles as well as any man in England at the time, for he had two excellent chances of becoming acquainted with them. Gabriel Harvey, writing to Spenser in April 1580³ says that among the books most read by the youth of that time, were Machiavelli's (presumably *The Prince* and *The Art of War*).

¹ For the examination of the two plays of which Marlowe's authorship is called in question—*The Contention* and the *True Tragedy*—see Appendix I.

² See the *True Tragedy* and Appendix I.

³ See The Works of Gabriel Harvey, ed. Grosart, Huth Library, vol. I, p. 69.

The Prince, although published in 1532, was not translated into English until more than a hundred years later, in 1640, but Marlowe, whether he knew Italian or not, was likely to hear discussions upon the ideas of a book so popular. Another and more favourable opportunity came to him in London, for the politicians of his day knew it from cover to cover, and the man who was the friend of Raleigh and the Walsinghams, and so, directly or indirectly, in touch with Cecil and Leicester, must have heard its principles debated by those who not only were most competent to judge and appreciate them, but had had practical experience of their working in the diplomatic circles of Europe.

✓ This indeed is borne out by the use he makes of the Machiavellian system in his plays. His is not the slipshod, half-superstitious knowledge of a man dependent upon popular report and hearsay, but the clearer understanding of one who has exercised a keen intelligence upon first-hand and reliable information. The dauntless courage and ruthlessness of Machiavelli's doctrines seem at first to have made a strong appeal to Marlowe: and in *The Jew of Malta*, which may have been written in the first burst of this enthusiasm, he invests them with a certain poetic splendour, the splendour of the Satanist warring on behalf of cold logic against a world-order of superstition, sentimentalism and hypocrisy. Even within this first play, the policy thus followed resolves itself, before the end, into a series of cunning endeavours to delve below the mines of an adversary, and, as habit and use make the principles more familiar to him, Marlowe's first nebulous vision is reduced to certain definite groups of ideas. In this and in his next play, *The Massacre at Paris*, he gradually tends to isolate from the body of Machiavelli's philosophy those parts which were most arresting and most extreme; he invests his villains with cold-blooded determination to compass their ends by whatever means will serve them best, and wade, if necessary "through slaughter to a throne"; but he omits

Machiavelli's half-regretful, half-humorous lament over the evil in the world that makes it necessary to fight it with its own weapons,¹ or his clear perception of the fact that determined severity is often more merciful in the long run than vacillating leniency ;² he enters lustily into Machiavelli's accounts of deep intrigue and of the policy which hides its motives and cloaks its selfish designs with carefully-chosen expressions of benevolence and virtue ; but his Barabas, his Guise and his Richard have only self-aggrandisement for their motives, and have lost even the faint, ulterior purpose, that of benefiting the state, which was at least in the beginning, the motive of Machiavelli's 'Prince.'³

In the *Contention* and the *True Tragedy* (assuming that these plays are in part, at least, Marlowe's) the tangle of intrigue and policy continues until there emerges the dominating figure of Richard, Duke of York. But at this point, although he embodies the callousness, the unscrupulousness and the singleness of purpose necessary to a Machiavellian conqueror, there are not wanting signs that Marlowe was losing interest and faith in both tactics and principles.

Although in his study of the reign of Henry VI he seems to have realised more fully the justification of Machiavelli's man of blood, and to give us as moving a picture as Machiavelli himself could wish of the leniency that sheds more blood than ruthlessness, yet this contemptible figure, with its feeble piety and fatal kindliness, is not altogether bereft of the sympathy of the author. (Marlowe has seen

¹ " . . . The manner in which we live, and that in which we ought to live, are things so wide asunder, that he who quits the one to betake himself to the other is more likely to destroy than to save himself ; since anyone who would act up to a perfect standard of goodness in everything, must be ruined among so many who are not good." *The Prince*, Chapter XV. (Translated by N. H. Thomson, Oxford, 1913.)

² " For he who quells disorder by a very few signal examples will in the end be more merciful than he who from excessive leniency suffers things to take their course and so result in rapine and bloodshed." *The Prince*, Chapter XVII.

³ *The Prince*, Chapter XVII *passim*.

more deeply into Machiavelli's system than when he wrote *The Jew of Malta* or *The Massacre at Paris*, and at the same time he has seen beyond it. Intrigue begets intrigue and vengeance leads to vengeance, until *The True Tragedy* sinks down into a deceptive calm in which the forces of the disputants are exhausted, but not their rancour. This is not Marlowe's final comment upon the fallacy of the Machiavellian system, (that, I think, is reserved for the play of *Edward the Second*), but it is as full of implicit condemnation in its way as is Machiavelli's own final chapter in which he craves for peace and for a leader to wipe out dissensions and unite Italy.¹

Thus Marlowe, well as he seems to have known *The Prince*, tried at first to make of Machiavelli's conception something other than its writer aimed at ; he saw in it only another expression of the aspiration, of the longing to outstrip man's limitations, that he had first revealed in *Tamburlaine*. (But Machiavelli's work is a practical handbook on the methods of building up and sustaining a small absolute monarchy in the midst of the intrigue and conflicts of sixteenth-century Italy.) It is not a study of the aspiring soul of man or of his desire to exceed his mortal nature, and in his first Machiavellian figure, Barabas the Jew of Malta, Marlowe endeavours to harness the two together. *The Prince* reveals a consistent theory of life which quietly and temperately sets aside the laws of Christianity and accepts with serene callousness a foundation of hatred instead of one of love. But the originality of the book lies not so much in any startlingly new statement as in the honesty with which the theory is made to square with prevailing practice and the unemotional clearness with which motives are laid bare. This element in Machiavelli must undoubtedly have appealed to Marlowe, as the personality of Raleigh appealed and for some of the same reasons ; as no other writer with whom we can connect him

¹ *The Prince*, Chapter XXVI. An exhortation to liberate Italy from the Barbarians.

ever appealed to him. The actual doctrines he probably accepted for a time, on the strength of this enthusiasm, but they by no means represented his interpretation of life. He outgrew his infatuation for them and lived to hold the balance in *Edward II* between the world of Machiavelli and the world which that policy trampled underfoot. But the spirit of Machiavelli, that much misunderstood and misinterpreted spirit, with its unflinching honesty of outlook, remained with him to the end. Greene, who in describing it could only fall back upon popular abuse of the "pestilent Machiavellian policy" yet perhaps spoke more truth than he knew when he accused Marlowe of being Machiavelli's 'Disciple.' The best of Machiavelli was not to be found in his doctrines, but in the clear, scientific honesty of thought which put on record those principles, cynical as they were. From this point of view there can be no question that the man who was responsible for the opinions recorded in the Baines libel was the disciple of the author of *The Prince*.

The prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, which dedicates that play to the spirit of Machiavelli, comes nearer, as has been implied, to embodying that spirit than do any of the dramas that follow. The train of connection is made clearer by the reference to the Guise as to its last incarnation, and something of Marlowe's consciousness of kinship and of closer understanding than was common in his countrymen is revealed in the next lines :

✓

" To some perhaps my name is odious,
But such as love me, gard me from their tongues,
And let them know that I am *Machevill*,
And weigh not men, and therefore not mens words : " ¹

This was the mind that Marlowe recognised in Machiavelli and it was the perception of this undeviating independence of spirit that enlisted his sympathy. Sometimes, even, he makes Machiavelli speak more than that astute diplomat

¹ Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, ll. 5-8.

would have set down for himself, and in the denunciation of religion, both here and in the speeches of the Guise,¹ Marlowe was a little beyond his commission, if only in attributing to the Italian that explicit expression of his more temeritous thought which his own system of policy taught him to avoid.²

" I count Religion but a childish Toy,
And hold there is no sinne but Ignorance."

In all else, however, he represents him fairly, even though in a manner which, necessarily, pandered to the popular hatred of the man of 'policy':

" Admir'd I am of those that hate me most.
Though some speake openly against my booke,
Yet will they reade me, and thereby attaine
To Peters Chayre . . .

" Many will talke of Title to a Crowne.
What right had *Cæsar* to the Empire?
Might first made Kings, and Lawes were then most sure
When like the *Dracos* they were writ in blood.
. . . o'th poore petty wites,
Let me be envy'd and not pittied!"³

Not only the vigilant cynicism of the mind that is revealed, but something in the sinister cold-bloodedness of Machiavelli's book made appeal to Marlowe's imagination. There are passages in it, set forth in all good faith, that read like Swift at the height of his irony; there is something shocking in the power, the calmness and the unapologetic simplicity of their setting-forth. It was some such inhuman mood as this which he endeavoured to reproduce: falteringly in Barabas and mixed with other motives, more clearly in Guise and in Richard of York. There was the fascination of a new world, forbidden and reputed full of

¹ See *The Massacre at Paris*, ll. 123-6.

² Compare (and contrast with Marlowe's thinly-veiled condemnation) the discreet phrasing of the eleventh chapter of *The Prince* (" Of Ecclesiastical Princedoms").

³ Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* *passim*.

untold evil ; of a discipline and a doctrine by which man's mind might reach supremacy, if not beyond the material world, yet at least within it ; a picture of man complete, unshakable, self-contained and self-reliant. All this, moreover, was to be achieved by the stripping-away of lies, of sentimentalism and of superstition. It is easy, I think, to guess at the impression that such a passage as Machiavelli's description of the policy of colonising must have made upon Marlowe. It might, as has been suggested, be an extract from a conversation between Gulliver and the king of Brobdingnagia :

" A Prince need not spend much on colonies. He can send them forth and support them at little or no charge to himself, and the only persons to whom he gives offence are those whom he deprives of their fields and houses to bestow them on the new inhabitants. Those thus injured form but a small part of the community, and remaining scattered and poor can never become dangerous. All others being left unmolested are in consequence easily quieted, and at the same time are afraid to make a false move, lest they share the fate of those who have been deprived of their possessions. In few words, these colonies are more faithful than soldiers, cost less, and give less offence, while those who are offended, being, as I have said, poor and scattered, cannot hurt. And here be it noted that men are either to be kindly treated, or utterly crushed, since they can revenge lighter injuries, but not graver. Wherefore the injury we do a man should be of a sort to leave no fear of reprisals."¹

Equally suggestive to Marlowe's mind must have been Machiavelli's seventeenth and eighteenth chapters, in which he gravely weighs the comparative advantages of being loved and of being feared, and decides on the whole in favour of fear ; deprecates injudicious lenity ; and coolly advocates an expedient use of cruelty and a constant practice of hypocrisy, or at least of as much hypocrisy as is necessary to mask the character and motives :

" It is not essential, then, that a Prince should have all the good qualities I have enumerated above, but it is most essential that he should seem to have them. Nay, I will venture to affirm

¹ *The Prince*, Chapter III (translated by N. H. Thomson, Oxford, 1913.)

that, if he has and invariably practises them all, they are hurtful, whereas the appearance of having them is useful. Thus, it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, religious, and upright, and also to be so; but the mind should remain so balanced that were it needful not to be so, you should be able and know how to change to the contrary.

" And you are to understand that a Prince, and most of all a new Prince, cannot observe all those rules of conduct in respect whereof men are accounted good, being often forced, in order to preserve his Princedom, to act in opposition to good faith, charity, humanity, and religion. He must therefore keep his mind ready to shift as the winds and tides of Fortune turn, and, as I have already said, ought not to quit good courses if he can help it, but should know how to follow evil if he must.

" A Prince should therefore be very careful that nothing ever escapes his lips which is not replete with the five qualities above named, so that, to see and hear him, one would think him the embodiment of mercy, good-faith, integrity, kindness and religion. And there is no virtue which it is more necessary for him to seem to possess than this last; because men in general judge rather by the eye than by the hand, for all can see but few can touch. Everyone sees what you seem, but few know what you are, and these few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the State to back them up."¹

The first two acts of *The Jew of Malta* contain the most strongly-imagined and sparingly-executed study that Marlowe ever made. They promise a play compact, clear and consistent, inspired by the author's intense belief in the power and significance of the mind that they gradually unfold. It is a stronger and a more bitter play than any that has gone before, though less passionate and less lyrical than its predecessors. The confusion of idea that was felt in *Tamburlaine* and that heightened the turmoil of *Faustus* is gone. The great questions that called forth the lyrical outbursts upon the nature of beauty and of the soul, and whose insistent clamour reached its climax in tragic conflict in the mind of Faustus, are dismissed in a few words, cynical yet sure:

" Rather had I a Jew be hated thus,
Than pittied in a Christian poverty :

¹ *The Prince*, Chapter XVIII (translated N. H. Thomson, Oxford, 1913).

For I can see no fruits in all their faith,
 But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride,
 Which me thinkes fits not their profession.
 Happily some haplesse man hath conscience,
 And for his conscience lives in beggery." ¹

The doubts are answered, perhaps not very happily and perhaps with a bitterness that suggests that the answer is not final and may have to be gradually revised, but the period is over in which doubt called out passion. In a mood of revulsion from the poetry and tenuous faith of early vision, the most cynical interpretation of the world is often the most acceptable, and the fierce exultation with which Marlowe here takes possession of the cynicism of Machiavelli suggests that he read into it an expression of his own mind. His early worship of beauty and of man's divinity is ostensibly thrown aside, and the coldest and lowest estimate of human nature best expresses this disillusionment. Yet the energy that craves for a goal worthy of its power is still unwearied, though foiled in its instinctive effort to find this goal in a Promethean lifting of man above the limits of his nature. For this baffled energy of spirit, Machiavelli's system seems equally to offer an opportunity of expression, and the power that was nebulous in Tamburlaine and still comparatively undisciplined in Faustus reappears in Barabas, shorn of its strange, undefined purpose, and grown compact and practical through reduction to a limited material end :

" Give me the Merchants of the *Indian Mynes*,
 That trade in metall of the purest mould ;
 The wealthy *Moore*, that in the *Easterne rockes*
 Without controule can picke his riches up . . .
 I must confesse we come not to be Kings :
 That's not our fault : . . .
 Give us a peacefull rule, make Christians Kings," ²

Marlowe's penetrating honesty of thought is turned,

¹ *The Jew of Malta*, ll. 152-8.

² ll. 54-7, 167-8, 172.

then, by the direct influence of Machiavelli, away from visions, theories and dogmas to the world of men and their intrigues. It was not, I think, his natural sphere ; *Tamburlaine*, his first spontaneous work, probably represents much more clearly the true trend of his mind, but it was an almost inevitable reaction. *The Jew of Malta* and the four plays that follow it are not, like *Tamburlaine*, the enshrining of a dream, or, like *Faustus*, the tragedy of an isolated thinker, but the picture of the Elizabethan world of "policy," in which men were unscrupulous, bold, implacable, cruel in power and sometimes heroic in defeat. And it is in his first study of this world that we begin to recognise in Marlowe the man whose trenchant exposure of shams is revealed in the document known as the Baines libel.

The play is, as has been remarked by all its editors, extremely difficult to describe, as the breakdown in the third and fourth acts is complete, and the recovery in the fifth only partial. Various explanations could be offered, such as that Marlowe lost interest after the first two acts and found his inspiration insufficient ; or that he was for some reason obliged to finish hastily what he had begun carefully ; or that he left the play to other hands after he had finished the first two acts, sketched the outlines of the next two, and written a rough draft of the fifth. I incline to some supposition such as this last because the development of the character of Barabas, which moves clearly through the first and second acts, is lost sight of entirely in the next two, but reappears approximately as we might have expected to find it in the fifth. Moreover, in the fifth act there are clear traces of the hand that wrote the first two, while there are only occasional traces of it in the intermediate acts. It is perhaps wiser to base any opinions of Marlowe's work in this play only on Acts I and II, and, with reservations, on Act V.

This condition accepted, the character of Barabas appears to have been one of the fullest studies that Marlowe

ever made. Indeed, had it been completed, it might have ranked beside the widely different study of King Edward II for insight and imaginative sympathy. Barabas, at the opening of the play, is a man who has become powerful by the steady exercise of native tenacity and intelligence, without being driven by a fierce or fanatic desire for power. Even at the height of his fortunes, when his wealth is greater than that of all the other Maltese merchants combined, he is not intoxicated by it. He gives way to no raptures, he does not dare God out of heaven, he never suggests that his hand "turns Fortune's wheel about." A kind of calculating serenity holds his exultation in check :

Jew : The ships are safe thou saist, and richly fraught. . . .
 Why then goe bid them come ashore,
 And bring with them their bils of entry : . . .
 But art thou master in a ship of mine,
 And is thy credit not enough for that ?

Merchant : The very Custome barely comes to more
 Than many Merchants of the Towne are worth,
 And therefore farre exceeds my credit, Sir.

Jew : Goe tell 'em the Jew of *Malta* sent thee, man :
 Tush, who amongst 'em knows not *Barabas* ?

Merchant : I goe.

Jew : So then, there's somewhat come.¹

In the restraint of this last phrase is revealed a sense of balance that is new to Marlowe, a respect for a disciplined and well-proportioned mind that is strangely at variance with the rebellious exaggerations of *Tamburlaine*. It is only under pressure of extreme suffering, when the only thing that he could have dreaded had come upon him through the agency of the basest hypocrisy and injustice, that Barabas's mind loses its balance, and ferocity and cunning gradually take possession of it. Even so, his clear-sightedness does not at once desert him, and, at the crisis of his fortunes, he is revealed as a man whose habit of thought is honest, beset on all sides by trickery and

¹ *Ll. 89-105 passim.*

hypocrisy sheltering themselves behind popular sentimentality and superstition. He is deliberately trapped by the Governor and Knights of Malta and the forfeiture of his goods, which had clearly been predetermined, is glossed over with a repulsive parade of justice, through which he sees unerringly :

Barabas : Will you then steale my goods ?
 Is theft the ground of your Religion ?

Governor : No, Jew, we take particularly thine
 To save the ruine of a multitude :
 And better one want for a common good,
 Then many perish for a private man : . . .

Knight : If your first curse fall heavy on thy head,
 And make thee poore and scornd of all the world,
 'Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sinne.

Barabas : What ? bring you Scripture to confirm your wrongs ?
 Preach me not out of my possessions. . . .
 The man that dealeth righteously shall live :
 And which of you can charge me otherwise ?

Governor : Out, wretched Barabas,
 Sham'st thou not thus to justifie thy selfe ?
 If thou rely upon thy righteousnesse,
 Be patient and thy riches will increase. . . .

Barabas : Well then my Lord, say, are you satisfied ? . . .
 Unlesse your unrelenting, flinty hearts
 Suppresse all pitty in your stony breasts,
 And now shall move you to bereave my life.

Governor : No, *Barabas*, to staine our hands with blood
 Is farre from us and our profession. . . .
 Content thee, *Barabas*, thou hast nought but right.¹

"Policie!" exclaims Barabas, left to himself, "that's their profession," and he adopts their own weapon, the only one remaining to him. But he never deceives himself; he becomes perforce a Machiavellian in his tactics, not a blind hypocrite, as are his opponents :

•

"As good dissemble that thou never mean'st
 As first meane truth, and then dissemble it,
 A counterfet profession is better
 Than unseene hypocrisie."²

¹ *Ll. 327-85 passim.*

² *Ll. 529-32.* •

And once adopted, the Machiavellian character suits him well, for he is of a quick invention, steady nerves and resolute ; under pressure of his wrongs he rapidly becomes implacable and unscrupulous. Though of the race that disclaims kingship and professes to ' fawn like spaniels,' he has as high a spirit and as unbending a temper as Machiavelli's aristocrat. " Things past recovery," he says at the climax of his misfortunes, " Are hardly cur'd with exclamations " and bids Abigail be silent, for " time may yield us an occasion." In catastrophe he is not dismayed to find himself alone ; it has not been his habit to hold himself referable to any other man :

" No, I will live ; nor loath I this my life :
 And since you leave me in the Ocean thus
 To sinke or swim, and put me to my shifts,
 I'le rouse my senses, and awake my selfe." ¹

He is indeed, as was Machiavelli's hero, and as were all of Marlowe's, " fram'd of finer mold than common men."

From this point a kind of diabolical cunning takes possession of Barabas, which is not unworthy of the dignity of his first appearance, for his schemes are bold, astute, ruthless and successful. He becomes, for the brief extent of an act and a half, a satanist, but a satanist who rebels against a world-order of unclean and unjust things. The third and fourth acts are broken up into a series of intrigues, some of which follow on naturally from Marlowe's scheme in the first part, while some, such as the Bellamira episodes, seem to be contrary to that purpose. More significant, however, than this, which is at best doubtful evidence, is the lapse in Barabas's character, out of which all power and inspiration seems to have gone, except for a rare phrase or two in which the spirit of the second act is revealed. In the fifth act the character becomes recognisable again, some of the impressiveness of the earlier part

returns to the play, and tactics that were begun then come to fruition. The intermediate steps in the development have been omitted, but the true Machiavellian emerges now and again from the confusion of the final act and suggests what would have been the nature of the acts in which Marlowe's work is less visible :

" Thus loving neither, will I live with both,
Making a profit of my policie ;
And he from whom my most advantage comes,
Shall be my friend.
This is the life we Jewes are us'd to lead ;
And reason too, for Christians doe the like." ¹

In the final catastrophe, Barabas's ' policy ' recoils upon his own head, and it was clearly Marlowe's intention from the first that it should do so. He reveals in his Jew a strong, dominating nature driven by the practices of the world in which it works to adopt the tactics of that world ; but, eager as he was to explore the possibilities of these principles, he seems to have seen clearly that their nature was fatal. He lets the curtain fall upon Barabas, corrupted and ruined by the weapons he had used, with none of the tragic, poignant regret that he appears to feel for the ruin of Tamburlaine or of Faustus. With these earlier figures he realised that defeat was inevitable but never understood fully why the defeat came about, and he leaves them with lingering doubt or despair.

" *Sunt lacrimæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.*"

But in the case of Barabas, although we attend upon the ruin of a noble mind, Marlowe leaves us with no sense of regret and very little sense of tragedy after the first two acts. He never identifies Barabas completely with himself as he does Tamburlaine and Faustus, and he seems to realise early in the play that the Machiavellian interpretation of man leaves out of account those vague, illimitable

¹ *Li.* 2213-18.

longings which, deny them as he would, his own experience forced him to accept as an essential part of man. And so, enthusiastically as he adopts it in the beginning, he is aware before the end of its limits. His sympathies leave the central figure and resign him without regret to the results, spiritual and material, of his machinations ; the author's energy turns instead to a pitiless revelation of the effects of this policy, and to an implicit denunciation of the system itself and of the society which forced into such service the soaring spirit of man. His position may perhaps be summed up in Machiavelli's own words : "The manner in which we live and in which we ought to live, are things so wide asunder that he who quits the one to betake himself to the other is more likely to destroy than to save himself ; since any one who would act up to a perfect standard of goodness in everything must be ruined among so many who are not good."

But he had not yet finished with the system. His realisation of its fatal consequences revealed by the catastrophe of *The Jew of Malta* formed the basis of the three plays which immediately followed : *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Contention*¹, and *The True Tragedy*.¹ In the first of these he attempted a study of a character that more completely represented Machiavelli's principles, and in the two later plays he widened his scope to examine statecraft in general, the effect of conflicts in a state, and the effect, good or otherwise, of 'policy' in the hands of one of the contestants. He seems to find no satisfactory answer in either case, save an increasing conviction that such characters are by no means wholly representative of man and of his motives. *Edward II*, the play that completes this group, indicates, by its sympathetic analysis of a figure who was the helpless prey of these intrigues, his rising certainty that there was a world elsewhere, as significant, if not more significant than that of 'policy,' and that more of the true nature of man was revealed in it.

¹ See Appendix I.

Meanwhile, in the *Jew of Malta* there lingers, if not the lyric quality of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, yet some traces of that rich descriptive power which so strangely fell into abeyance in the next three plays. He has not so completely severed his connection with descriptive poetry as in *The Massacre*, *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, and Barabas, dwelling upon the virtues of his heaped-up jewels betrays a sense of beauty as unsuitable to his profession and purposes as was Tamburlaine's or Faustus's :

“ Bags of fiery *Opals*, *Saphires*, *Amatists*,
Iacints, hard *Topas*, grasse-greene *Emeraulds*,
Beauteous *Rubyes*, sparkling *Diamonds*,
And seildsene costly stones of so great price,
As one of them indifferently rated,
And of a Carrect of this quantity,
May serve in perill of calamity
To ransome great Kings from captivity.
This is the ware wherein consists my wealth :
And thus me thinkes should men of judgement frame
Their meanes of traffique from the vulgar trade,
And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
Infinite riches in a little roome.”¹

There clings to him, moreover, a felicity of phrasing, which, whether it describes his exultation over his recovered gold, or the poison with which he is destroying the nunnery, is instinct with poetry, whether dark or bright :

“ Now *Phæbus* ope the eye-lids of the day,
And for the Raven wake the morning Larke,
That I may hover with her in the Ayre,
Singing ore these, as she does ore her young.”²

“ It is a precious powder that I bought
Of an *Italian* in *Ancona* once,
Whose operation is to binde, infect,
And poyson deeply : ”³

Such phrases as these—images that suggest something of Webster's peculiar power—are frequent in Barabas's

¹ *Ll.* 60-72.

² *Ll.* 701-4.

³ *Ll.* 1371-4.

speech. They represent a deepening and intensifying of the vision that had descended from Tamburlaine's 'white Tartarian hills' to follow Barabas through the maze of intrigue and plot to which the Elizabethan gave the name of "policy."

CHAPTER VII

THE PLAYS OF POLICY—II

THE MASSACRE AT PARIS

“ Oft have I leveld, and at last have learnd,
That perill is the cheefest way to happines,
And resolution honors fairest aime.
What glory is there in a common good,
That hanges for every peasant to atchive ?
That like I best that flyes beyond my reach.
Set me to scale the high Peramides,
And thereon set the Diadem of Fraunce,
Ile either rend it with my nayles to naught,
Or mount the top with my aspiring winges,
Although my downfall be the deepest hell.
For this, I wake, when others think I sleepe,
For this, I waite, that scornes attendance else : . . .

“ Then *Guise*,
Since thou hast all the Cardes within thy hands
To shuffle or cut, take this as surest thing :
That right or wrong, thou deale thy selfe a King. . . .

“ Give me a look, that when I bend the browes,
Pale death may walke in furrowes of my face :
A hand, that with a graspe may gripe the world,
An eare, to heare what my detractors say,
A royall seate, a scepter and a crowne :
That those which doe beholde, they may become
As men that stand and gase against the Sunne.
The plot is laide, and things shall come to passe,
Where resolution strives for victory.” ¹

THE discovery of the Duke of Guise at the beginning of *The Massacre at Paris*, that “ perill is the cheefest way to happines ” would serve for motto for the contestants of this and the two plays that follow.² *The*

¹ *The Massacre at Paris*, ll. 94-166 *passim*.

² For *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, see Appendix I.

Massacre shows one of these figures, vigilant, unscrupulous, single-minded, bending to his purpose the designs of the other characters, triumphing in spite of circumstance, and falling at last a victim to the universal hatred which he had despised. His energy is compact and practical, his villainy explicit ; he reveals in soliloquy a knowledge of his own heart which, combined with his other qualities, renders him perhaps the most nearly Machiavellian figure that Marlowe ever drew. Yet he lacks life, as Tamburlaine, Faustus and the earlier Barabas never lacked it. He has less imagination than any of these and he is a smaller figure than they. His aspiration, so much better defined than theirs, is, paradoxically, much less convincing. We see all that he aims at—the possession of the crown of France—as clearly as he sees it himself, and we ask what drives him to desire it. We never know what Tamburlaine and Faustus really desire, nor do they know themselves, but we never doubt their inspiration. For, in the two earlier heroes (and in part in Barabas), that which Marlowe could not express was the truest thing in his characters, the undefined aspiration which every man has felt and is, therefore, unquestioned of any man. In the Duke of Guise there is nothing undefined ; his desire is precise, limited and obtainable. Therefore, he is not alive and we refuse to accept Marlowe's account of him.

For this reason he never fulfils the promise of this first speech. No development or discovery is possible after anything so clear. Occasionally his phrases are worthy of him, as when he describes the signal for the massacre as 'That bel that to ye devils mattins rings,' but more often they are mechanical reiterations of what has gone before. At the height of his fortunes he speaks lines with so little passion and lyric force that they sound like bathos :

" Now sues the King for favour to the *Guise*,
And all his Minions stoup when I commaund :

Why this tis to have an army in the field. . . .
 Now doe I but begin to look about,
 And all my former time was spent in vaine : ”¹

Immediately upon this forced and unconvincing speech of triumph enters the assassin. It is a situation that might have been vivid in its contrasts had Marlowe so wished, but, as it stands, it is abrupt and colourless. A flash of spirit comes into his puppet at the last, and he mends, though but imperfectly, his automatic repetition of the phrases of the Machiavellian stage villain. One of the murderers enters and, overcome by remorse (why, it is hard to understand), tells Guise that the others are waiting to kill him in the room through which he is about to pass. “Therefore, good my Lord,” he cries, “Goe not foorth.” And the Guise rises to a moment of resolution, which yet has no reach beyond the present :

“ Yet *Cæsar* shall goe forth.
 Let mean consaits, and baser men feare death,
 But they are pesants, *I* am Duke of *Guise* :
 And princes with their lookes ingender feare.”²

The superstition cheats him, as it cheated Edward II ; he enters the room and the blow is struck. Mortimer in the later play of *Edward II* turns with a fine gesture from the world and “Goes to discover countries yet unknown.” But the Guise’s thoughts in his death-speech all turn back to the world by which his life had been limited, to the purposes yet unachieved and to the revenge which his survivors may take upon his murderers :

“ Oh that I have not power to stay my life,
 Nor immortalitie to be reveng’d :
 To dye by Pesantes, what a greefe is this ?
 Ah *Sextus*, be reveng’d upon the King,
 Philip and Parma, I am slaine for you : -
 Pope excommunicate, Philip depose,
 The wicked branch of curst *Valois* his line.
Vive la messa, perish Hugonets,
 Thus *Cæsar* did goe foorth, and thus he dyed.”³

¹ *Ll.* 985-7, 992-3.

² *Ll.* 1005-8.

³ *Ll.* 1019-27.

The speech is a monument of lost opportunities, with which the rest of the play is on a level.

It is indeed a play of lost opportunities. The action is tangled at the beginning and lacks that deft clearness of exposition that marks the beginning of *The Contention* and of *The True Tragedy*. It develops, in the description of the massacre itself, into a series of quick confusing scenes never fully worked out, so that it leaves the impression of a hastily sketched spectacle, a rough draft that should have been filled in later. The deaths of Ramus and Coligny are bungled, pedestrian pieces of work, though one of these at least must have been instinct with suggestions to Marlowe. The death-speech of Ramus, the great Sorbonne logician, whose rebellion against the authority of Aristotle must have wakened an answer in Marlowe's mind, is a disappointing series of hints that but serve to show us what Marlowe might have made of this (which we knew already) and only emphasise the failure of the theme to kindle him.¹

The same weak management of his material is shown in Marlowe's treatment of some of the characters, especially that of the Queen of Navarre. The Queen is explicitness itself as regards her motives and methods; so much so, indeed, that she is like a child's drawing with the "guiding lines" left in. She is even at times perilously near the humour of the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*; in fact, many of her speeches would be far better expressed in her later prototype's brief and pithy phrases. "I see!" says the Queen of Hearts, "off with his head!" "Tush, man," says Marlowe's Queen—

" . . . let me alone with him,
To work the way to bring this thing to passe :

¹ The metre of this speech (*ll. 404-18*) is so irregular as to make it probable that Marlowe wrote it more fully and that what we have is a condensed playhouse version of the original. This assumption would leave us free to credit him with a better requiem to the memory of a fellow-thinker.

And if he doe deny what I doe say,
 Ile dispatch him with his brother presently,
 And then shall *Mounser* weare the diadem :
 Tush, all shall dye unles I have my will,
 For while she lives *Katherine* will be Queene.
 Come my Lord, let us go seek the *Guise*," ¹

Into the mouth of the King of Navarre, on the other hand, Marlowe puts a string of flaccid, listless moralisings that read like badly-selected maxims from a Sunday-school tract. It may be that he was trying to draw the character of a prig ; this had he contrived to invest the figure with life he might have achieved. As he stands, however, Navarre is so far devoid of meaning that it is hard to believe that Marlowe had a main hand in his creation. His occasional efforts in the direction of Marlovian imagery are, indeed, so unfortunate as to suggest rather another author (the literary capacities of the average stage-manager of the time are indicated) endeavouring to imitate Marlowe's style and achieving in the process a very commendable parody :

" The power of vengeance now incampes it selfe
 Upon the hauty mountains of my brest :
 Plaies with her goary coulours of revenge,
 Whom I respect as leaves of boasting greene,
 That change their colour when the winter comes,
 When I shall vaunt as victor in revenge." ²

So weak is the impression left by this play that it is almost impossible to believe it wholly Marlowe's work. The choice of the theme and the outlines of the figure of the Guise may have been his, but, with the exception of a passage here and there, he seems to have done little beyond sketch out the salient situations. Some other hand with relatively little literary power but good stage sense, might have filled in hastily and slightly what was necessary to link together the Marlovian portions.

¹ *Li.* 653-60.

² *Li.* 723-8.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLAYS OF POLICY—III

EDWARD II

“Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.”

IN Marlowe's last play, *Edward II*, a single figure is again the centre of interest, as in *Tamburlaine*, in *Faustus* and in *The Jew of Malta*, but with one notable difference, that it is no longer upon a powerful or dominating figure that the attention is concentrated, but upon a frail character in conflict with its surroundings and gradually overpowered by them. There is a group of barons, Warwick, Kent, Lancaster, Pembroke and the two Mortimers, very like those in *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*, who strive, not against each other, but almost unanimously against Edward and Gaveston. The King and his favourite contrive to outlive the storm for a while, but the ruin of both is inevitable. The obstinacy of Edward, who refuses to listen to reason, conciliation, or threats, and yet lacks the active principle necessary to force his will upon the men about him, carries in it the seeds of destruction.

The character of Edward, which Marlowe approaches with all the sympathy in his power, which, indeed, he made the centre of his play, is revealed slowly, in great complexity! It is an essentially frivolous character, with sudden, shallow bursts of emotion—violent as they are changeable—incapable of serious thought or feeling. Edward has no sense of responsibility, or of proportion, yet he is not incapable of inspiring affection, and his followers never desert him as do those of Henry VI. It is

impossible to make tragedy out of such a figure, but Marlowe invests it with ever-increasing pathos and even contrives by this means that a sense of kingly dignity shall be mingled with our last impressions. *✓*

In the first scene in which he appears, Edward's ill-starred love for Gaveston and the deep-rooted hatred of the barons are instantly revealed. The nobles have sworn to destroy the favourite and their rough handling of the King shows that they have already lost their respect for him, though they are statesmen enough to wish to preserve the appearance of his dignity before the people :

" And know my lord, ere I will breake my oath,
This sword of mine that should offend your foes,
Shall sleepe within the scabberd at thy neede,
And underneath thy banners march who will,
For *Mortimer* will hang his armor up." ¹ *✓*

The King replies with a gust of rage and defiance as unrestrained as was his transport of joy in beholding Gaveston. He is more imperious than a stronger man would dare to be, and presumes upon the sacredness of his kingship like a child using a talisman whose magic it does not understand, but in which it has a superstitious faith :

" Beseemes it thee to contradict thy king ?
Frownst thou thereat, aspiring Lancaster ?
The sworde shall plane the furrowes of thy browes," ² *✓*

There is a hectic uneasiness about this defiance : Edward knows nothing of the nature of that power that makes kings feared, and is alternately infuriated and dismayed to find that he does not produce the effect he should. His understanding is incapable of grappling with the problem, and he wavers between exaggeration of his privileges and pathetic longing to be freed from the claims of his position and enjoy a private life in peace with Gaveston. He, like Henry VI, might have done well enough as a private man,

¹ *Edward II*, ll. 85-9.

² *ll. 92-4.*

though he lacks the spontaneous piety of the Lancastrian and has a streak of cruel insolence which makes him cling to his prerogatives. But he admits, with disarming candour, that he has no sense of his responsibilities, and regards the power and wealth of kingship as an accidental personal advantage to be used to embellish his private life. Directly it is suggested that his position as king must encroach upon or limit that private life, his fury is loosed, and with confusing irrelevance he urges his kingly right of freedom. It is an irresponsible, undeveloped mind, incapable of grasping the seriousness of any issue :

" Ile give thee more, for but to honour thee,
Is Edward pleazd with kinglie regiment." ¹ 

Yet his position is an obsession with him and he endeavours as far as he understands it to imitate the carriage of a king. He reminds himself continually that a king should be 'princelie,' stern, implacable when his privileges are invaded, and he tries to give the impression of strength by fits of blustering rage. He obscures and confuses his own nature under the unreal picture of a king that he has taken for his model and sways inconsistently from one to the other.

" Was ever king thus overrulde as I ? . . .
Meete you for this, proud overdaring peeres ?
Ere my sweete *Gaveston* shall part from me,
This Ile shall fleete upon the Ocean,
And wander to the unfrequented Inde.

It bootes me not to threat, I must speake faire . . .
Make severall kingdomes of this monarchie,
And share it equally amongst you all,
So I may have some nooke or corner left,
To frolike with my deerest *Gaveston*." ²

There is in this feeling for *Gaveston*, were not the claims of the highest responsibilities sacrificed to it

¹ *Li.* 164-5.

² *Li.* 333-68 *passim*.

something magnanimous. Alone with Gaveston, all tormenting memories of what is due to a king fall from him and the natural man, frail, unbalanced, childish but affectionate, is revealed. Like Henry VI, he will not accept the world about him, but must have a refuge from it. Henry takes refuge in a piety which has little relation to the lives of men ; Edward, in the love of Gaveston or of Spenser, and, when these are gone, in piety also. When he is driven into a corner he makes pathetic play with his affection, all the more pathetic because it is a sincere and half-unconscious expression of his need for refuge :

Mor. iu. : Why should you love him, whome the world hates so ?

Edw. : Because he loves me more than all the world ;
Ah none but rude and savage minded men,
Would seeke the ruine of my *Gaveston*,
You that be noble borne should pitie him.¹

And his description of Gaveston's love is true, for Edward has the power of inspiring undying affection in the men who come within the circle of his intimacy. Gaveston, Spenser and Baldock all begin their relations with Edward with a touch of ' pollicie,' and all end by standing by him to their deaths. There is no question of the genuineness of the feeling on both sides when Gaveston, banished from England by the peers, takes leave of the King :

Edw. : Here take my picture, and let me weare thine.
O might I keepe thee heere, as I doe this,
Happie were I, but now most miserable.

Gav. : 'Tis something to be pitied of a king.

Edw. : Thou shalt not hence, ile hide thee *Gaveston*.

Gav. : I shal be found and then twil greeve me more. . . .

Edw. : The ~~time~~ is little that thou hast to stay,
And therefore give me leave to looke my fill,
But come sweete friend, ile beare thee on thy way.

Gav. : The peeres will frowne.

Edw. : I passe not for their anger, come lets go,
O that we might as well returne as goe.²

¹ *Ll. 371-5.*

² *Ll. 423-39 passim.*

In Edward's case, mere shrinking from responsibilities would not have been enough—as it was with Henry VI—to doom him. For the barons are not at strife, except with the insolence of his favourite, and at one stage they even make up their minds to bear that. In Henry's case, the catastrophe was ready to fall and he was the helpless victim of circumstances that only a strong man could have controlled. (Something more was needed to provoke Edward's fate and it was the streak of violence in his own nature that brought it about.) The contentment that descends upon him like a charm when he is alone with Gaveston gives place in the presence of all other men to insane hyper-sensitiveness and suspicion. He has savage outbursts of cruelty, in which he drives the Queen away and slaughters the conquered nobles. He outwears all men's patience and respect, and even the loyalty of his brother Edmund fails before this final test. His frenzy is violent enough to do harm, but not strong enough to produce any lasting effect and before the slow accumulation of hostility he collapses into sudden pathos and querulous self-pity. It is the alternation of these two moods in the crisis of his fortune which completes his ruin.

Such a character as this attracts more sympathy in adversity than in power, and Marlowe, once he had conceived it, had no need to call in stage devices to assist in rousing the affection of his audience for the defeated king. The violence and cruelty are submerged, the effort to be a king can at last be laid aside, not with the defiance of a peevish child, but with the grace of a man accepting the inevitable in pathetic dignity. The limitations and frivolity which made it impossible for him to face the responsibilities of kingship are lost to sight in captivity, where men tend to fill their time with gentle, irrelevant fancies. The irritated bewilderment of the King who was no king, becomes a profound, gentle despondency in which his inability to understand the causes of his suffering takes on some of the pathos of a hurt child:

" Father, this life contemplative is heaven,
 O that I might this life in quiet lead, . . .
 . . . good father on thy lap
 Lay I this head, laden with mickle care,
 O might I never open these eyes againe,
 Never againe lift up this drooping head,
 O never more lift up this dying hart ! " ¹

When his last retreat is discovered and Leicester comes to conduct him to prison, a fatalistic, almost prophetic dignity comes upon him and fills the beholders with reverence.

Edw. : Oh my starres !
 Why do you lowre unkindly on a king ? . . .
Spencer, a sweet *Spencer*, thus then must we part.

Spen. in. : We must my lord, so will the angry heavens,
 Nay so will hell, and cruell *Mortimer*,
 The gentle heavens have not to do in this.

Bald. : My lord, it is in vaine to greeve or storme,
 Here humblie of your grace we take our leaves,
 Our lots are cast, I feare me so is thine.

Edw. : In heaven wee may, in earth never shall wee
 meete, . . .
 Hence fained weeds, unfained are my woes. ²

With one brief interval of passion, when he refuses to yield up the Crown, this pale cast of thought subdues Edward's mind until the end of the play. The piety in which he now takes refuge is illuminated with half-hysterical flashes that leap like rockets into the darkness.

" . . . now sweete God of heaven,
 Make me despise this transitorie pompe,
 And sit for aye inthronized in heaven,
 Come death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,
 Or if I live, let me forget my selfe." ³

The characteristics of his mind in this stage are a simple dignity and courtesy, of which there had been hardly a trace in his prosperity. " Away, out of my sight ! " he

¹ *Ll.* 1887-8, 1906-10.

² *Ll.* 1929-64 *passim*.

³ *Ll.* 2093-7.

exclaims to the Bishop, and then, with an instantaneous change of manner,

" . . . ah pardon me,
Greefe makes me lunatick . . .
Commend me to my sonne, and bid him rule
Better then I, yet how have I transgrest,
Unlesse it be with too much clemencie ? " ¹

And to Lightborn, who is about to murder him, he apologises for his suspicion with a grace and poignancy that would have been the undoing of any but a Marlovian villain :

" Forgive my thought, for having such a thought,
One jewell have I left, receive thou this." ²

This character, complex and subtle in its weakness, Marlowe has created from a very different record given him by his sources. The independence with which he treated chronology and the relations of the various characters in his play has often been noticed,³ but, great as is his freedom in that, it is over-shadowed by his reinterpretation of the character of the King. The historical Edward II revealed all the characteristics—most of them naturally unlovable—of a degenerate.⁴ He was a man of great physical strength and arrested mental development, fond of low company and of mechanical occupations, given to outbursts of physical violence and ungovernable passion, devoid of intelligence, but possessed of low cunning, perverted and unmanageable. Of this picture, Marlowe has taken part, just as he has followed in part the record of events, but he has

¹ *Ll. 2100-10 passim.*

² *Ll. 2531-2.*

³ See especially the introduction to the edition of *Edward II* by W. D. Briggs (1914) and G. P. Baker : *Dramatic Technique in Marlowe* (Essays and Studies of The English Association, Vol. IV).

⁴ See the article by Chalfont Robinson : *Was King Edward II a degenerate?* in the *American Journal of Insanity*, January, 1910. The evidence accumulated there throws interesting light on Marlowe's portrait, and emphasises Marlowe's deliberate softening of the uglier and more robust traits in Edward's character, and his preservation of the pathetic and the inexplicable element of an abnormal personality.

transformed the details of the character and their bearing upon each other so that the man as a whole, although he frequently does what the historical Edward did, is a different figure. It is characteristic of Marlowe to convert all he touches to beauty: the dull impassivity of Edward in captivity becomes in his hands a gentle enduring of adversity; the notorious fondness for favourites, bluntly set down by the historian as perversion, becomes a not un-beautiful love-story against a dark background of storm and danger. Deliberately, and as if conscious of insight and sympathy which gave him the right so to interpret it, Marlowe reveals a complete, consistent and truly pathetic figure, the victim of the maladjustment of circumstances. His Edward is hardly strong enough to support a tragic fate, but he moves in pathos as his native atmosphere. He is too frail for the rôle which is thrust upon him, a rôle which he tries, nevertheless, to fulfil after his fashion, because while he lives, he is the keystone of the State and cannot be released from his position. The situation is one for which there is no remedy and in which the destruction of the victim is inevitable.

Marlowe has even sacrificed some of the practical ability with which history credits Edward; Holinshed's King was successful in the field as a fighter, if not as a general, and his part in the battle of Bannockburn was valiant. But Marlowe presents him shorn of even this robustness and accentuates the triviality and helplessness of his behaviour:

“ When wert thou in the field with banner spred,
 But once, and then thy souldiers marcht like players,
 With garish robes, not armor, and thy selfe
 Bedaubd with golde, rode laughing at the rest,
 Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,
 Where womens favors hung like labels downe.” ¹

And at the end of his life, immured in Berkeley Castle and

¹ *LL.* 984-9.

waiting for death, he can contrast his condition with no more martial a scene than a tournament at the French court :

“ Tell *Isabell* the Queene, I lookt not thus,
When for her sake I ran at tilt in Fraunce,
And there unhorste the duke of *Cleremont*.”¹

The emphasis, even at the end, is still thrown upon his frailness, and he wins our sympathy not by any sudden kingly vigour, but by the wistful charm of a slight and helpless character falling a prey to forces at once more robust and uglier than itself. By contrast with the villainy by which he is ‘ benetted round,’ Edward becomes a beautiful and pathetic figure, full of courtesy and gentleness. We forget, under the charm that such natures cast in adversity, the insolence, the cruelty and the frivolity of his prosperous days. Thus, from records which are wearisome reading to all but a psychologist, Marlowe has created a poem full of inevitable pathos, which, if not tragic, at least approaches that realm of art in which we realise afresh that ‘ *mentem mortalia tangunt*.’ *

For the sake of this central figure much else is sacrificed : the other figures fall into subsidiary positions and remind us that Marlowe still, at the height of his technical skill, tended to work in two mediums, one for the figure with which he was chiefly concerned, which he approached as a rule subjectively or imaginatively, the other for the figures which served as foils to it, with whom he never identified himself, whom he approached objectively. This, which was conspicuous in *Tamburlaine*, is subdued in *Edward II.* for the minor characters there live, though it is still true that they have not the same life as the central figure. Yet, roughly as they are drawn, there is enough to show that Marlowe, with increased knowledge of the world and men, had grasped the main qualities of their natures clearly enough, even if he did not reveal them clearly. Only, with

¹ *LL.* 2516-18.

characteristic singleness of mind, he used just so much of them—and no more—as he needed to further his main object.

The prelates of *Edward II* attain a dignity that was unknown to the priests of *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, or *The Contention*. The Bishop of Coventry is a bold, outspoken man, firm without violence, and impossible to turn from his purpose by threats. The Bishop of Canterbury has the same inflexibility of purpose and he adds to it a simple majesty of diction that is akin to the best speeches of *Henry VI*.

Bish. : "First were his sacred garments rent and torne,
Then laide they violent hands upon him next,
Himselfe imprisoned, and his goods asceasd.
This certifie the Pope, away, take horsse.

Lan. : My lord, will you take armes against the king ?

Bish. : What neede I, God himselfe is up in armes,
When violence is offered to the church."¹

The bitterness of *Tamburlaine* is gone ; what Marlowe's view of dogmatic religions was at this later period we know from the 'opinions' recorded by Baines, but in two respects he has revised his earlier verdicts ; he accepts religion as a powerful and necessary constituent of the State and he accepts a good man when he sees him, irrespective of the form his belief takes.

The Queen, Mortimer and Gaveston, are all treated in the same way, wisely when there is time, sketchily when Marlowe's interests are elsewhere. The Queen's relations with Mortimer are subtly developed up to the point at which the murder of the King becomes necessary and draws all interests towards him. Then the lovers, for whom our sympathy had been slowly growing during the earlier part of the play, become merely partners in a 'pollicie,' as base as it is crafty. Both their characters are neglected from this point onwards : the Queen loses the dignity of her

¹ *Ll.* 242-8.

wrongs and becomes a tool in Mortimer's hands ; Mortimer loses his impetuosity and becomes a mechanical stage villain, doomed to fail because empty of imagination :

Mor. : The prince I rule, the queene do I commaund,
And with a lowly conge to the ground,
The proudest lords salute me as I passe,
I seale, I cancell, I do what I will,
Feard am I more than lov'd, let me be feard,
And when I frowne, make all the court looke pale, . . .

Now is all sure, the Queene and *Mortimer*
Shall rule the realme, the king, and none rule us,
Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance,
And what I list commaund, who dare controwle ?
Maior sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere, . . .

As for my selfe, I stand as *Joves* huge tree,
And others are but shrubs compard to me,
All tremble at my name, and I feare none,¹

This is but weary iteration of the outworn motto of the Guise 'perill is the cheefest way to happines' ; it is lifeless beside the prologue of Machiavelli or the defiance of Richard of York. But this is only part of the frustration that awaits all the 'politicians' of the play. Mortimer persists in a kind of dull Machiavellianism until he falls a victim to his own lack of imagination ; Gaveston, Baldock and Spenser begin with a career of diplomacy which leads to prosperity through Edward's favour, and end by becoming lovers of the man whose weakness they had meant to exploit, standing by him even when the result can only be death. Baldock, who is first seen labouring to

" . . . cast the scholler off,
And learne to court it like a Gentleman,"²

speaks of the King in his last moments as "the sunshine of our life" and adjures his companion to "pay nature's debt with cheerefull countenance." And Gaveston's last cry

¹ *Ll.* 2379-84, 2396-2400, 2579-81.

² *Ll.* 751-2.

is not a plea for his life or for fairer treatment, not even a curse upon Warwick or a thought of other worlds, but a simple expression of grief.

“ Treacherous earle, shall I not see the king ? ” ¹

The power of the weak Edward is set in all these characters over against the self-seeking and ‘ politic ’ instincts. In every case, directly or indirectly, the affection which the helpless king inspired, destroyed either the Machiavellianism or the Machiavellian. This, I think, is Marlowe’s final comment upon the doctrine of ‘ pollicie.’

The play of *Edward II* is the last of the group of political and historical plays, and seems, from its level, toneless yet technically faultless quality, to have been written after the inspiration that directed Marlowe into that field had died down. There is comparatively little poetry in it and little irregularity. We miss at once the splendour and the bathos of the earlier plays. An added maturity is revealed in the treatment of the people of the drama, in detailed descriptions, in control and adaptation of the plot. But that rare element for which we value the early plays is lacking until, just before the fall of the curtain, Mortimer speaks the lines which bid farewell to the world of action and intrigue :

Mort. iu. : Base fortune, now I see, that in thy wheele
 There is a point, to which when men aspire,
 They tumble hedlong downe : that point I touchte,
 And seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
 Why should I greeve at my declining fall ?
 Farewell faire Queene, weepe not for *Mortimer*,
 That scornes the world, and as a traveller,
 Goes to discover countries yet unknowne. ²

Inevitably, then, this play gathers up themes and problems from several antecedent plays. Those from this immediate group tend to culminate in the implicit denial of the

¹ L. 1302.

² Ll. 2627-34.

Machiavellian system and in the question: 'What is a king?' which Marlowe never wholly answers. Instead, he gives a series of portraits—Mycetes, Fernese, Charles, Henry VI, Edward II—of men who are kings, yet not kingly. By a process of deduction, indeed, the attributes of a king might be discerned, yet even those dominating figures who, though born private men, rule by virtue of determination and valour, are not, with the possible exception of Tamburlaine, kingly. Marlowe has not answered the question explicitly and only in part implicitly, in the emphasis he has laid on the absence of the sense of responsibility, both in the frivolous monarchs and in the men of unscrupulous ambition.

The question carries us back to the wider question that belongs to the earlier plays, that was raised in *Tamburlaine* and in *Faustus*: What is the nature of one man's supremacy over another? This is itself part of the question which might serve to cover the whole of Marlowe's work; what are the limits and what is the nature of the power of man's mind? To see his answer we must look, it is true, at the whole body of his work, but the question is most insistently put in *Tamburlaine*, and is not fully answered until we add the evidence of *Hero and Leander*, the most spontaneous work of his mature years. In that poem he returned to the poetic spirit of his early work, which had been gradually eliminated from the later plays; to the study of man's mind moving in freedom of passion and imagination, rather than in the confusion of intrigue. There is little in *Edward II* to point onward to *Hero and Leander*, except the acknowledgment of failure with which he dismisses that deviation from the paths of poetry which culminates in this, his latest and least characteristic play.

CHAPTER IX

HERO AND LEANDER

“ I walked in Hellas years ago
With friends in white attire . . . ”

“ Thus while dum signs their yeelding harts entangled,
The aire with sparkes of living fire was spangled,
And night deepe drencht in mystie *Acheron*
Heav’d up her head, and halfe the world upon
Breath’d darknesse forth.” ¹

IN *Hero and Leander* we meet again the poetry of the *Elegies* and of *Dido*, grown richer and more certain, the poetry of the descriptive parts of *Tamburlaine* and of the rare lyric passages of *Faustus*. Marlowe’s last poem is closely linked with these earliest and more spontaneous expressions of his love of beauty, and, reading it, we feel that the circle has ended where it began. Here is again, as in the *Elegies* and in *Dido*, the poetry that draws its inspiration from the senses, that expresses itself naturally in concrete images and in descriptions full of colour and harmony of form and sound. Once again, and more deeply than with the imperfect early work, we are impressed by its content ; the poet of *Hero and Leander* does not “ look before and after,” much less does he “ pine for what is not.” There are no tears in his joy and his song is sweet without the aid of hinted sadness. Beauty is enough, and the love of beauty is neither an instinct in conflict with moral preoccupations and dark, obscure fears, nor a poignant devotion to a threatened and possibly doomed cause. The poetry of *Hero and Leander* is akin to the strange, isolated passages in *Faustus* in which this same beauty stands out in radiant contrast to the dark, confused passions of the drama. Only in *Hero and Leander* the sunlight is

¹ *Sestiad I, ll. 187-91.*

unbroken ; no northern twilight of the gods casts its shadow over the warm serenity of this mood. Something, perhaps, we do miss of the earlier Marlowe, something which is almost peculiar to *Tamburlaine* ; the keen, thin note of aspiration and unfulfilled desire, the yearning and the mingling of the sources of rapture and of pain, which belong only to early youth. But all else that is beautiful in the imagery of the early plays returns in *Hero and Leander* with an added gravity of form, a firmness and maturity of moulding, that render it the highest work of his invention, and make the aspirations of *Tamburlaine* appear frenzied and forlorn.

For it is the first work of Marlowe's full maturity. The wealth, the ease and the strength of the workmanship would alone mark it as this. He chooses a theme well within his power and it pleases him to adorn it with the rich inventiveness of a full imagination. For the first time he ceases to grapple with problems or ideas hovering almost out of reach of the human understanding ; the voyages of discovery are over for a time, and the poet turns his back upon the stress and effort of his early years, to reap, instead, a rich harvest in a little field. It is the period when the forces that have continually reached out in a wide range and, though often appearing strained and weakened with the effort, have in reality gained strength at every outgoing, turn back to house themselves for a time in a narrower world. There, in repose, their power and their mastery is revealed. Marlowe's mind, brooding upon Musæus's story of a Greek boy and girl, is suddenly seen to be wise, rich, sane, humorous, and tolerant, as it never was while it still climbed "after knowledge infinite." Rich beauty is revealed in single lines and phrases, graceful, effortless, and, were it not for the proportion and the balanced form of each passage, we might be tempted to say, casual :

" . . . *Hero* the faire,
Whom young *Apollo* courted for her haire," ¹

¹ *Sestyad I, ll. 5-6.*

“ . . . the ground
Was strewd with pearle, and in low corral groves
Sweet singing Meremaids, sported with their loves ” ¹

Even when this beauty takes the form of conceits, as it sometimes does, they are not the youthful hyperboles of Tamburlaine, but deliberate and half-humorous extravagances which flatter their purpose in defeating it :

“ Some say, for her the fairest *Cupid* pyn’d,
And looking in her face, was strooken blind.” ²

And many seeing great princes were denied,
Pyn’d as they went, and thinking on her died.” ³

Different again from the poetry of the early work is the ripe wisdom which is felt in the measured conduct of the poem, in the assurance with which the theme is approached, and in the brief, sententious couplets that sum up now a paradox, now the conclusion of a description or argument. They have the pithiness of Greek epigrams and sometimes, too, the irony, the finality and the underlying bitterness. Yet they are spoken with a smile, and the bitterness comes rather from long acceptance of hard or painful truth than from the transient cynicism of youth. Leander’s argument against virginity is a long chain of such detached, self-contained pieces of wisdom, though perhaps Marlowe has slyly and deliberately invested his young and inexperienced lover with the perfect knowledge proper only to his age :

“ Like untun’d golden strings all women are,
Which long time lie untouched, will harshly jarre.” ⁴

“ Men foolishly doe call it vertuous,
What vertue is it that is borne with us ?
Much lesse can honour bee ascrib’d thereto,
Honour is purchac’d by the deedes wee do.” ⁵

¹ Sestyad II, ll. 160-2.
² Ib., ll. 129-30.

³ Sestyad I, ll. 37-8.
⁴ Ib., ll. 229-30.

⁵ Ib., ll. 277-80.

Better are those in which he speaks in his own person and condenses into one brief couplet the thoughts that, in *Tamburlaine*, he would have pursued through mazes of conjecture in a twenty-line speech :

“ Where both deliberat, the love is slight,
Who ever lov’d, that lov’d not at first sight ? ” . . . ¹
“ For from the earth to heaven is *Cupid* rais’d,
Where fancie is in equall ballance pais’d.” ²

The consummation of this mood, a mood of gravity and humour combined, a mood in which the knowledge revealed is the fruit of earnest and often bitter thought which growing maturity and strength have mellowed until it becomes matter for mirth rather than for passion, is contained in the description of the fall of Hermes who despised “ the love of th’everlasting Destinies.”

“ They seeing it, both Love and him abhor’d,
And *Jupiter* unto his place restor’d.
And but that Learning, in despight of Fate,
Will mount aloft, and enter heaven gate,
And to the seat of *Jove* it selfe advaunce,
Hermes had slept in hell with ignoraunce,
Yet as a punishment they added this,
That he and *Povertie* should alwaies kis.
And to this day is everie scholler poore,
Grosse gold from them runs headlong to the boore.
Likewise the angrie sisters thus deluded,
To venge themselves on *Hermes*, have concluded
That *Midas* brood shall sit in Honors chaire,
To which the *Muses* sonnes are only heire :
And fruitfull wits that in aspiring are,
Shall discontent run into regions farre ;
And few great lords in vertuous deeds shall joy,
But be surpris’d with every garish toy ;
And still inrich the loftie servile clowne,
Who with incroching guile keepes learning downe.” ³

In *Hero and Leander* we have, then, the last phase of Marlowe’s mind, and though the revelation of it is not so

¹ Sestyad I, ll. 175-6.

² Sestyad II, ll. 31-2.
• Sestyad I, ll. 463-82

complete as might at first glance appear, yet there is enough to suggest that he is for the first time in full and untrammelled possession of his own powers. For what is revealed in this poem is the mind of a man who is master of his desire. Limited though the scope is, there is Hellenic security and repose in the mood that dictates it, and, though it deliberately abstains from serious or profound treatment of the theme, and so tells us little of his thought, the tone is an invaluable index of his frame of mind. There is no longer any exploring of high and serious themes because, for the moment, thought has exhausted itself. The purpose of thought has been fulfilled, and the poet turns with relief to a richer life of the senses than could have been achieved without his earlier servitude. His mood is secure and fearless ; it corresponds, in the realm of poetic experience and expression, with the fearlessness and certainty of the 'opinions' recorded by Baines. In that explicit statement of his conclusions and of his view of some of the most puzzling questions of his time, we have a process of thought which can only lead to understanding and repose of mind. In the mood of *Hero and Leander* we recognise security and repose which presupposes a complete release from the doubts and anxieties of the earlier days, from the 'bugbeares' which 'keep men in awe.' The two things are not separable ; they explain each other.

And yet something is held back in *Hero and Leander*, just as there is something essential that is unrevealed in each of the earlier works. What would Marlowe have made of the four cantos that Chapman finished, apparently at his suggestion ? The question is not easily avoided because of our insistent feeling that what Marlowe wrote, beautiful as it is in its finish and in its detail, is not all that we might expect in the ripest fruit of his invention. That he should pause to write a simple, sensuous poem, beautiful and seductive, but not passionate or profound, is possible if we consider it the fruit of a few months' idleness, and the very choice is an undeniable testimony of increased

mastery and sureness of mind. But when we imagine a poem of three times, or even twice, the length of this fragment, written throughout in this mood of dalliance, we realise that the treatment of the theme is, for all its apparent perfection (perhaps because of it) defective. It lacks passion, the first essential of love poetry, and a thing that Marlowe had never entirely lacked before, even in the weary flatness of *Edward II.* If the fullness and power of *Hero and Leander* make the aspiration of *Tamburlaine* seem nervous and unreal, with equal truth might it be said that Marlowe's Greek lovers could have learnt something from the raptures of the Scythian shepherd.

Heavy ornament and rich irrelevant imagery conceal for a while the slenderness and the ephemeral quality of the emotions. The poem breaks off soon enough to leave us still satisfied with what has gone before, not soon enough to spare the inevitable thought that this love must needs suffer some strange transmutation if its story is ever to become the fitting vehicle for tragedy. Musæus touches his story, more simply as regards description, more subtly and intensely as regards the emotion. He is brief, restrained and tragic; while Marlowe is delighting in arabesques and rich fancies, he moves to his climax with the breathlessness of a more profound emotion: ¹

"*La elle l'essuie, le perfume d'essences et de roses chasse l'odeur de la mer, l'entraîne encore tout haletant sur un duvet moelleux et, l'enlaçant de ses bras, exprime ainsi sa tendresse :*

'*Epoux qui viens de souffrir ce que jamais époux n'a souffert, assez tu a lutté contre l'onde amère et l'odeur suffocante des vagues agitées ; oublie dans mon sein les fatigues.*'

Elle dit : Léandre lui délie sa ceinture ; le doux mystère de Vénus est accompli. Hymen réel, mais sans pompe ; coucher nuptial, mais sans hymnes. Point d'invocation des poètes à Junon, points de flambeaux brillants ni de danses légères autour de la couche ; point de père ni de mère vénérable qui chantent l'hyménéée. Mais le silence, dans cette heure de plaisir, avait dressé ce lit et préparé cette couche ; l'ombre seule para l'épouse et la fête se célébra sans concert." ¹

¹ I have chosen a French prose version to represent the original; it is at once franker and more reticent than any English version that I know. (Musée : *Hero et Leandre*. Traduction de Laporte du Theil, Paris, 1879).

Against this may be set fairly the lines in which Marlowe describes the consummation of Leander's love, lines that are assuredly the most beautiful in the poem and, like the death scene of *Faustus* or Tamburlaine's description of the soul, come so near to describing what is for ever indescribable as to make us wonder whether Marlowe has not indeed achieved the impossible task. Yet the mere setting together of the two passages gives the measure of the difference between Marlowe's limited object and the unlimited suggestion of the more reticent Greek treatment.

" Wherein *Leander* on her quivering brest,
 Breathlesse spoke some thing, and sigh'd out the rest ;
 Which so prevail'd, as he with small ado
 Inclos'd her in his armes and kist her to.
 And everie kisse to her was as a charme,
 And to *Leander* as a fresh alarme,
 So that the truce was broke, and she alas,
 (Poore sillie maiden) at his mercie was.
 Love is not ful of pittie (as men say)
 But deaffe and cruell, where he meanes to pray.
 Even as a bird, which in our hands we wring,
 Foorth plungeth, and oft flutters with her wing.
 She trembling strove, this strife of hers (like that
 Which made the world) another world begat
 Of unknowne joy. Treason was in her thought,
 And cunningly to yeeld her selfe she sought.
 Seeming not woon, yet woon she was at length,
 In such warres women use but halfe their strength.
Leander now like Theban *Hercules*,
 Entred the orchard of *Th'esperides*,
 Whose fruit none rightly can describe but hee
 That puls or shakes it from the golden tree." ¹

For simpleness of emotion, directness and wealth of sensuous beauty, the poem is almost without parallel in literature, but the more fully we enter into its enervating enchantment, the more insistent becomes the suggestion that the man who wrote, at the beginning of his career, of the soul :

" Still climbing after knowledge infinite
 And alwaies mooving as the restles Spheares,"

¹ Sestyad II, ll. 279-300.

could, when the time came for him to make spontaneous choice of this theme, have told us more than is contained in the two cantos of *Hero and Leander*. The beauty of the detail dazzles us ; in our joy at finding again the peace and the richness of his earliest poems, we forget the uneasy sense that followed us through the *Elegies* and *Dido* that this beauty was soulless and that it was waiting for the inspiration of Tamburlaine before it could live.

Are we to believe, then, that Marlowe laid aside that aspiration, that he did indeed come full circle and return with only added experience and technique to his earliest ideas, discarding all that had filled the period between ? Unfortunate as was in some ways that intervening period, and unnatural, I think this would have been still more so for a man of Marlowe's calibre. Nor do I believe that such a statement would have covered the completed *Hero and Leander*. I think it not improbable that Marlowe had in mind some definite, perhaps startling transmutation of the relationship between his lovers, to render it equal to its tragic fate. Possibly it was the coming of that fate that would itself have effected the transmutation, but I cannot believe Marlowe incapable of raising the emotion from earth to heaven, or of calling forth passion again after the quiescence of the first two cantos. As it stands, *Hero and Leander* offers yet another aspect of his mind concerning which he never spoke out. And even had he written the whole poem this might still have been so.

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CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

*“ . . . A Mind forever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.”*

AT the end of his study of Marlowe's plays the reader is left with the double impression of a strongly-outlined personality and of rapid change and growth. So essential a part of Marlowe's mental biography is this expansion that no picture drawn long before his death could fairly be said to represent him. If we choose for our study the period of the writing of *Tamburlaine* or of *Faustus* we are disturbed by the as yet unfulfilled promise of later powers. There is a finer balance, a juster proportion in his nature at the time of *Hero and Leander* than at any earlier time, though he left no comprehensive work to put this upon record. His mind is cramped during the earlier years by the influence of an intense and narrow tradition from which it freed itself with violence, but by the end of his life the irregularities and deformities seem to disappear. The dominant lines of the personality are as clear in the later as in the earlier period, but in the later there is also harmony, well-being and self-knowledge.) Any attempt to portray his personality must inevitably prefer this period, the period at which he was for the first time fully himself.

To contemporaries who met and conversed with him casually he must have seemed a man of strong passions and of obstinate opinions, of acute and pregnant questions, now fearless and contemptuous, now satirical and impish; a man who rejoiced in destroying the cherished idols of the mean and timorous without offering them the solace

of a rival fetish ; a man who cleared the ground of superstitions and laughed at bugbears, who denounced ignorance as the root of sin ; a Lucretius warning men not to fear, clear-sighted in the detection of errors and shams, ruthless in exposure and indiscreet in the cutting intolerance of his expression. To the circle of men with whom he was at one he must have seemed a man of wit and keen spiritual insight, happy in the acuteness of his perception, glorying in the range of his thought ; a man of unshaken confidence whom the tumult of his early years had left secure in self-knowledge ; master of his mind and so far master of others that he looked with an ironic, fugitive smile upon their weakness and doubt ; in another mood, a man of rich content, possessed of deep resources of poetry and vision, a man of golden thought and speech or placid and isolated reverie. To the mass of his contemporaries who knew him only by repute, he was by turns a dangerous revolutionary who persuaded many to become atheists, an insolent and domineering rival, "kind Kit Marlowe" who could make "a saw of might" and the poet who stood "up to the chin in the Pierean flood." To us, who approach him through the painful medium of thought and reconstruction and who know him better only than the last of these, he is a thinker of peerless honesty and deep intensity, hampered in the earlier part of his life by the limitation and confusion that accompany intense thought, but distinguished in his latter years by clarity and widening comprehension.)

From such balance of qualities as this certain habits of thought and pre-occupation result, some, those least balanced and most immoderate, more evident in the earlier work than in the later, some characteristic of his thought throughout.

Almost alone among the great Elizabethans who stand second to Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe does not traffic in the affairs of men, nor does he record or illuminate the everyday world. Throughout his life he seems to have

maintained, without being conscious of it, some of the loneliness of a great scientist or philosopher; he was absorbed sometimes in dreams and poetic visions, sometimes in speculations on the nature and being of man, but seldom (if ever) in the slender network of relationships by which men are bound to their fellows. For man's relation to man he cared by nature hardly at all; man's relation to God and to the universe was his whole concern.) And within this sphere no thinker of his day—one is almost tempted to say of any day—is clearer, more fearless, or more honest.

The world which lay around him seems, at first glance, to have been strangely insignificant to Marlowe. In his earlier plays this is peculiarly marked; the world of dreams makes meaningless the world in which the poet himself moved.) Distant countries, and passions and actions even farther removed from the monotonous academic life of the 16th century university, are the stuff of *Tamburlaine* and of *Dido*, and a man who might have sailed with Drake is found conquering Africa from the quadrangle of a Cambridge college.) Ideas excite him more than the characters and lives of men, and he is led to body forth his ideas in dreams of a world of action rather than to seek for understanding or for their realisation in the actual world that lay ready to his hand.) And this choice is not due entirely to perversity of circumstance, though much may be explained by the immuring of an eager spirit within the walls of a university; the desire of experience and of knowledge of men was less strong than the instinct to contemplate and classify their ideas.) Marlowe desired action and passion and the march of life—as who does not who is robust and young?—but there was something that, perhaps unconsciously and at long last, he desired more, and the inability to surrender himself entirely to the world of action sprang from a deeper interest in the world of ideas. So far does this disregard go that often it is not what Marlowe sees that impresses us first, but the absence

from his poetry of that world of humanity and of concrete objects that lay around him and that he did not see. How much of everyday Elizabethan life must have passed before Marlowe's eyes ; how little of it he reveals in image or allusion. We look in vain in his poetry for direct traces of the scenes he had passed through ; of Medieval Canterbury with its Gothic architecture, its ancient and choice traditions ; of the colour and pageantry of Tudor progresses, masks and ceremonials ; of the quietness of fen-bound Cambridge, which moved Milton deeply by its 'studious cloister pale' and 'storied windows richly dight' ; of wayfaring life, chance meetings and talk upon the roads of Eastern England ; inns and fellow-travellers met upon the highways between Cambridge and London ; of the life of London streets, taverns and theatres. From the plays of Shakespeare alone we could reconstruct with comparative vividness the life of the age in which he lived ; the hints serve as foundation for two large volumes. But, leaving aside the question of the smaller quantity of Marlowe's work, it would go ill with the man who tried to compile from the nine extant plays a picture of 'Marlowe's England.' He is native rather to a country in which the voyages of Marco Polo, the conquests of the Great Cham, the wrestling of the souls of men with devils, are everyday events. His mind is withdrawn and travels upon a way of its own. Almost we may say of it that this way is 'hidden with God.'

But if we are content instead to follow Marlowe's mind upon its own course of thought we are amazed, not at the impressions and experiences that left no mark upon him, but at the depth of his understanding of certain issues that touch man's life nearer the root than do the material interests of the everyday world. It is true that, for many years, Marlowe is unable to analyse or to re-create the character of an individual man, or to tell us anything of the complexity of his relations with other men. But in that deeper, inner world where not men's differences but

their common and essential likeness is in question, he moves as a master. He considers in man not the subtle distinctions and varying relationships that mark him off from other men or bind him to them, but the immutable element in man, the spirit of man which can be matched against the universe; and here his voice has authority.

He strips away all that might cloud or deflect the vision and forces us to look at man face to face with God, where no other man can stand beside him. So almost impossible a task is this that the mind falters before it. He leads us to a realisation that dazzles and stupefies by its absolute-ness and its finality. He forces upon the consciousness of his readers, by an intensity which there is no gainsaying, naked truth which is yet too simple to be apprehended. The 'white radiance of eternity,' seen now and again, by a Job, by an Æschylus, is seen, too by Marlowe; 'the dome of many-coloured glass' is shattered, but the vision is beyond participation, beyond the imagination of all but these few. Like them, Marlowe seeks the cause and explanation of that reaching-out of man's spirit towards a truth which can be apprehended but never expounded; to this the external world served only as a dark background. Of men's habits and customs, of certain of the social aspects of their minds and passions, he knew little more than a child; but the needs of their souls he understood profoundly and there is terrible clarity in his 'understanding.'

And so he is inclined to approach man only on this side. All that concerns the nature of man in isolation is material for his thought, but the minds that he studies work sometimes in a kind of vacuum. The world is indeed about them and upon it they themselves work—Tamburlaine, Barabas, even Faustus—but it has no power to mould them. Fate does not conspire with Faustus' own mind to deepen the channels down which that mind rushes to destruction, as it does with Macbeth. There are no fatal accidents here, no coming of Duncan to the castle, no haunting prophecies of witches, much less the urging of

another will. | Alone and of its own strength Faustus' mind works its fate, and if at any moment that mind could rebel fully against it, fate would be powerless and the career of destruction arrested. There are no subtle incentives from without to supplement the forces within ; these take their untrammelled, isolated course to a logical conclusion. Yet it is as impossible for Faustus to free himself as it is for Macbeth, and fate is as inevitable in Marlowe's world as in Shakespeare's. Only, with Marlowe, the whole process takes place within a mind which is cut off from other minds, while with Shakespeare the minds of the agents are part of the scheme of a wider universe, part of the pattern of other lives, modified by and modifying them.)

| This, though from one point of view it constitutes Marlowe's greatest strength, led, in his earlier work, to corresponding weakness. Having only an absolute standard to which to bring man, he tended to demand that man should be little short of a god. He tested the race and its achievement in *Faustus* by choosing the highest example of that achievement, a man endowed with the highest intellectual power ; the failure of this man, whom he had made, as it were, a test case, comprehended the ruin of all the others whom Marlowe had assumed him to surpass. No other conception of man's possibilities entered his mind than Faustus' ideal, 'Tire thy brains to gain a deity.' If man cannot be God, as is abundantly proved, then he is nothing. Such a scheme of things admitted of no solution and no consolation : unmitigated gloom was the only possible answer to this unbending challenge.

| As a result, Marlowe, at this stage in his experiments in the power of the mind, proceeded like a man climbing successive mountain-tops ; as long as there was some possibility yet unscaled, the inspiration led him on ; but when, in each of the great dramas, he had reached the limit of possibility, despair set in with the knowledge that the skies were as distant as ever. ' Yet art thou still but Faustus and a man ! ' It is an index both of the rareness

and of the poverty of Marlowe's mind before it reached its full development that his conception of human nobility involved the transcending of human limitations :

" And by those steps that he hath scal'd the heavens
May we become immortall like the Gods." f . x .

If we go back a step further we may trace the beginnings of this disruptive thought in *Tamburlaine*, in which the barbaric, primitive imagery, the passionate and undisciplined exultations are eloquent of the poet's desire to escape from something dull, oppressive, even menacing. But his mind was already divided, and side by side with this appeared those questions and doubts, religious and moral, which were to increase in fervour and check the expression of his love of beauty. His mind had already strayed from its normal channels ; he was losing the habit of direct experience and sensation and diverting his energy to build up a dream of life instead of possessing life. The immediate effect of this process was to intensify the poetry itself by stimulating the imagination to fever-point. The restless beauty of *Tamburlaine*, unsatisfying as it is, is yet without parallel among the works of his contemporaries. The later results were more sinister, and the imagination, which had been stimulated to brilliance at the period when it should have been feeding upon the experience of the senses and storing the means of future strength, began to flag almost immediately afterwards.

The next play, *Faustus*, showed the reaping of the whirlwind. The dream of *Tamburlaine*, as is the inevitable fate of such dreams, had been shattered by contact with the actual world. Beauty, which had been forced into this unnatural service, was now alternately condemned as sin and worshipped as a consolation, the more poignant for the inevitable doom which hung over it. Against it were a black, confused array of thoughts, passions, speculations and superstitions among which Marlowe's ardent

mind toiled invincibly to separate truth from falsehood. Confused though the issue of the play was, the effort was not unrewarded, and the clarity of thought which distinguished the reflections of his next play, *The Jew of Malta*, marked an advance towards the solution of the problems that clouded the earlier works.)

But it was achieved at great cost. (The spontaneous poetic emotion which was native to Marlowe) which was revealed, even before the writing of *Tamburlaine*, in his earliest works, *The Elegies of Ovid* and the play of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, (was now almost entirely submerged. The lyric passages in *Faustus*, though rare, had been invested with a firmness and sweetness surpassing even that of *Tamburlaine*. But in *The Jew of Malta* there was hardly a trace of them. Instead, was increased power of thought, of construction and of knowledge of human affairs, but these things, excellent in their way, were but an advance in technical proficiency. They were not essential to the development of Marlowe's genius,) and their presence suggested that his interest in affairs, in the 'policy' of Machiavelli and in the political intrigues which sprang from it, was accidental. The period during which he lingered among these things—never of primary importance to Marlowe—saw the quenching of the poetic fire that could alone sustain him. Certainly the three plays that followed *The Jew of Malta*—*The Massacre at Paris*, *The Contention*, and *The True Tragedy*—though the last two showed a steady increase in strength of treatment and maturity of comment, showed a corresponding decrease in lyric quality. The play of *Edward II*, which rounded off this group of historical and political dramas, was level and toneless and its emotional value lay in the quiet pathos which surrounded the figure of the unkingly King.)

But the unexpected revival in *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe's early worship of beauty showed that, though submerged, it had not been destroyed. It reappeared in this, his last, unfinished poem, with a maturity and strength

that had never belonged to the early revelation.) With its Hellenic repose, security and formal excellence, this poem seems to take up the tale of Marlowe's poetic development, not at the point at which we left it in the fragmentary lyric passages of *Faustus*, but many stages in advance of this, as if, during the period of dreary and uncongenial work upon subjects alien to his genius, the deeper forces of his nature had pursued their own subterranean course towards perfection. The circumstances of his life, and even the occupations of his mind, were powerless to check this inevitable progress, and (in his last work Marlowe seems to have brought to fruition his mental strife and his poetic development; the mind is no longer divided and thought no longer at war with feeling. (At the period at which he wrote *Hero and Leander* Marlowe was, for the first time, in full possession of his power, a united and harmonious power.)

But this full power is not expressed in the poem; the mood in which *Hero and Leander* was written reveals its presence, but not its whole nature. In all that had preceded, Marlowe had given only a confused and imperfect picture of his mind, at war with itself in *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, alienated from its deepest impulses in the succeeding plays. And still, in *Hero and Leander*, the revelation is not complete; he deliberately narrows his circle and limits his theme, so that the full range of thought and feeling which he must finally have possessed is never recorded in any of his works. Clear as was his later thinking, and passionate as were his emotions, it may truly be said of him that he never spoke out. (Each play that he wrote endeavoured afresh to express what he himself imperfectly discerned or felt, and because there was an unnatural strife within his mind each effort was frustrated. He died upon the threshold of self-knowledge, not before he had mastered his world, but before he had put that mastery upon record.)

(As was suggested at the beginning of this chapter,

Marlowe seems, throughout his life, to have shouldered away ideas, experiences and knowledge that were irrelevant to his instinctive demands and to have laid hold simply and directly upon those things of which he had need. Yet, though at first glance the very opposite impression is received, we find the stuff of the Elizabethan world, strangely transmuted, in every page of his work. It is the transmutation which is significant, a process by which the actions and events of that world are made to yield up to Marlowe the secret of the underlying thoughts and ideas which prompted them. The Elizabethan world is never photographed or portrayed in his works ; but its ideas and aspirations find nowhere a truer revelation ; none of his contemporaries reflect its spirit, its desires and efforts better than he.

A simple instance of such transmutation comes to mind. To us, looking back over three hundred years, one of the most significant series of events in that age is the vast enterprise which inspired and organised the voyages of discovery ; that ebullition of daring and God-like curiosity that crossed trackless seas to found the American nation. The wonders and highly-coloured fantasies reported by the voyagers appealed to the credulity of poets and public alike ; Shakespeare clothes with concrete forms the marvels of the Bermudas. But if we turn back to the year 1593 when much of this was already current, Marlowe has little to tell us of the wonders and marvels, of dog-headed men and the sun coming up like thunder out of the far East. Of these the friend of Harriot and of Raleigh has no more to say than some 19th century writer who disregarded them as ancient fables.¹

¹ A parallel might be drawn in the cases of many other spheres of knowledge which preoccupied Marlowe's contemporaries and left him, apparently, unaffected. In the case even of astronomical and geographical learning, which appealed more directly to Marlowe, the same distinction may be drawn between his approach and that of many of his contemporaries. Marlowe seeks for knowledge ; he will have the truth about this strange, half-hidden learning ; Shakespeare and Spenser care little about scientific truth in comparison with the picturesque effect of a reference, or the effect of the knowledge upon human lives and emotions.

Yet this is not the whole truth, and though Marlowe never reproduced directly the material of Hakluyt's Voyages, he was not, I think, untouched by them. There is a moment at the end of *Edward II* when Mortimer, standing upon the threshold of eternity, ceases abruptly from his Senecan death speech upon the mutability of fortune to break into two lines of passionate and imaginative thought—perhaps the only lines in the play that ring with the note of Marlowe's earlier voice :

“ . . . Weepe not for *Mortimer*
That scornes the world, and as a traveller,
Goes to discover countries yet unknowne.”

The metaphor that he chooses, and even more the bearing he adopts in facing the event, indicate that deep in Marlowe's mind lay certain memories, the impressions left by those Westward voyages. The lives and deaths of the voyagers had made no emotional—far less any sentimental—appeal to him. But they had remained an image of eternal forth-faring, an expression of one of the deepest of man's desires.

We may go further and say that these voyagers, to whom there is no direct allusion throughout his works, have a closer kinship with Marlowe's mind than with most of their contemporaries. From the moment when, in *Tamburlaine*, he asks the question “What is beauty?” throughout the successive experiments recorded in *Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II* and *Hero and Leander* (Marlowe is, of all Elizabethans, the truest explorer) His career is a long voyage of discovery; his America is always just beyond the horizon. He endeavours, blindly and passionately at first, later with more sureness and clarity, to map new territory; new thought, and truths ascertained by thought; new dreams, visions and ecstasies created by the imagination. When the possibility of discovery sank, as it appears to have done in *Edward II*, his spirit sank with it, and the

result is a lifeless play. When a new world revealed itself this spirit rose again into the radiance of the mood that dictated *Hero and Leander*. There is deep understanding of his own needs and of the inspiration that sustained him, in the two lines that Marlowe gives to Mortimer in his death-scene. Perhaps through the gloom of reasonableness that besets that play Marlowe had already caught a glimpse of "countries yet unknown"; in the setting forth to discover them his spirit was rejuvenated. (The life of Marlowe's age is never reflected immediately in his work, and of its perishable form and substance he tells us little. Yet he is not unaffected by it: in its eternal and deathless spirit it is continually present.)

12

APPENDIX I

THE WHOLE CONTENTION BETWEEN THE TWO HOUSES OF YORK AND LANCASTER AND THE TRUE TRAGEDY OF RICHARD, DUKE OF YORK

[Upon the authorship of these two plays (first published in quarto in 1594-1595) it is impossible as yet to give a final verdict. The evidence has been clearly and thoroughly laid down by C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Authorship of the Second and Third Parts of Henry VI*,¹ and scholarship has been busy with the problem both before and since. Because I feel that there are traces of Marlowe in the language and thought of these plays, and unmistakable traces in the general conception, I should be sorry, as I have already said, to exclude them from a study of his mind and thought. Yet, because I am by no means satisfied that the texts which have reached us represent Marlowe's work to anything like the same extent as the more obviously corrupt text of *Faustus* or the more readily vouched for text of the *Massacre of Paris*, I have not wished to treat them alongside the rest of his work and have preferred to relegate them to an appendix. Though Marlowe is undoubtedly in these plays, they are not, in the form in which they have reached us, fit to be placed, as revelations of his mind, on the same level with *Tamburlaine*, *Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II*, *Hero and Leander* or even the early work.

For the purposes of this appendix, I have, however, assumed his authorship in the main and treated these two plays as forming part of the group which begins with the *Jew of Malta* and ends with *Edward II*. To that group two plays upon this subject, conceived by Marlowe, do undoubtedly belong. I hesitate to go further and say either that his conception was ever completed in detail by Marlowe himself or that the two texts with which we are concerned represent that completion. I am almost more willing to say that they certainly do not.]

THE two plays, *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy* are marked by an increase of sympathy and of power that place their best portions on a level with *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II*. Marlowe shows in these two plays an imaginative grasp of a wide range of characters—York, Henry, Warwick, Gloucester, Queen Margaret, Duke Humphrey,

¹ Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1912.

Cade, Suffolk, Beaufort, Rutland, into all of which he enters with at least some degree of understanding. He maps out the contest between the strong, dominating barons, sees how their forces balance and shows the battle swaying now to one side, now to another, as vigour meets vigour and neither gives ground. And from time to time he shifts his angle of approach and shows us, with equal if not with greater sympathy, the crushing of a weaker nature caught between these mighty forces. All this implies increase of power; power to conceive and to form the story from the chaotic and shapeless material from which Marlowe sparingly selects incidents and events; power to charge with strong emotion scenes of tumultuous passion, of pathos or of grim irony; power to sum up, in curt phrases that linger in the memory, the pent-up feeling and sardonic humour of these fierce lives.

Perhaps this growing capacity in Marlowe is best revealed in the pungency of individual phrases which we instinctively credit to his account; brief, graphic epitomes of an emotion, a frame of mind; phrases, at times, of an ineradicable poignancy or beauty. Warwick in *The True Tragedy* describes the listless, half-hearted soldiers who had given up the battle, in a vivid picture:

" Our souldiers like the night Owles lasie flight,
Or like an idle thresher with a flaile,
Fel gentlie downe as if they smote their friends." ¹

Suffolk in *The Contention*, taking leave of Queen Margaret has here and there a phrase that, for pathos and poignancy, might match with those of *Edward II*:

Suffolke : I goe.

Queene : And take my heart with thee (*she kisseth him*).

Suffolke : A jewell lockt into the wofulst caske,
That ever yet containde a thing of woorth,
Thus like a splitted barke, so sunder we.
This way fall I to death. (Exit Suffolke.)

Queene : This way for me. ² (Exit Queene.)

The gloom of the council scene in *The Contention*, in which

¹ Scene V, ll. 97-9.

² Scene X, ll. 214-19.

the death of Duke Humphrey is determined upon, is crystallised in the sinister euphemism by which Suffolk hints at the further purpose all have in mind :

" If our King Henry had shooke hands with death, . . ." ¹

and the language of vehemence rings out, more true even than in the speeches of Barabas and Mortimer, when the two parties meet over the death-bed of the Duke :

Queene : Suffolke and the Cardinall had him in charge,
And they I trust sir, are no murtherers.

Warwick : I, but twas well knowne they were not his friends,
And tis well seene he found some enemies . . .

Suffolke : I weare no knife to slaughter sleeping men,
But heres a vengefull sword, rusted with ease,
That shall be scoured in his rankorous heart,
That slanders me with murthers crimson badge.²

But this power of curt, incisive phrasing—a power which was first clearly revealed in *The Jew of Malta*—is only the inevitable result of that increased condensation and fullness of thought which marks the conduct of these two plays. The strength of the first two acts of *The Jew of Malta* appears again, most strikingly in the outstanding scenes which gather the plays together, such as the death of Suffolk in the twelfth scene of the *Contention*, the Cade scenes (13-20) of the same play, or the deaths of Rutland and York (scenes 3 and 4 of *The True Tragedy*). The scene in which Suffolk, overshadowed by the obscure prophecy that he shall die " by water," is captured by pirates as he sets out for the French coast, is developed with economy and power. Suspense and apprehension gradually deepen from the moment when Suffolk starts at hearing the pirate who has captured him hailed as ' Water ' by his mates. At first he cannot believe—nor can the readers—that one of the greatest earls of England should be thus obscurely murdered, and as his fate slowly closes in upon him suspense gives way to realisation and horror. His lofty arguments are shattered with the captain's grim,

¹ Scene IX, l. 118.

² Scene X, ll. 66-83 *passim*.

half-humorous common-sense, a quality that Marlowe in his maturity appreciated to the full :

Suffolke : Staie villaine, thy prisoner is a Prince,
The Duke of Suffolke, William de la Poull.

Captain : The Duke of Suffolke folded up in rags.

Suffolke : I sir, but these rags are no part of the Duke,
Jove sometime went disguisde, and why not I ?

Captain : I but Jove was never slaine as thou shalt be.¹

The end of the scene is worthy of the grim irony of the beginning. Suffolk, as soon as he sees the case is hopeless, gives up the effort to save his life and withdraws into calm, aristocratic contempt :

“ First let this necke stoupe to the axes edge,
Before this knee do bow to any,
Save to the God of heaven and to my King.” ²

And he goes to execution, a true Renaissance gentleman, comforting himself with classical analogy and precedent :

“ A Swordar and bandeto slave,
Murthered sweete Tully.
Brutus bastard-hand stabde Julius Cæsar,
And Suffolke dies by Pyrates on the seas.” ³

York's death in the fourth scene of the *True Tragedy* is a well sustained series of long speeches ; lacking the lyrical quality of the long speeches in *Tamburlaine*, but almost compensating for it by their balanced proportions and the cumulative effect of the characters so revealed. More poignant than this, more simple, and less obviously engineered, is the scene of the death of the boy Earl of Rutland. After a few perhaps unlikely similes that spoil his first lines, he slips easily into the language of a terror-stricken child and goes far to make us feel, by the end of the scene, that Marlowe's children express childish passions and states of mind better than Shakespeare's. The intense vividness with which any

¹ Scene XII, ll. 28-33.

² Scene XII, ll. 64-66.
• Scene XII, ll. 71-4.

emotion he had experienced was impressed upon Marlowe's memory probably gave him this, and many another, unexpected flash of insight :

Cliff : In vaine thou speakest poore boy : my father's bloud
Hath stopt the passage where thy wordes shoulde
enter.

Rutland : Then let my fathers blood ope it againe ?
He is a man, and *Clifford* cope with him.¹

This has the sound of truth.

Of greater interest, perhaps, are the scenes which describe Cade's rebellion in the *Contention*. Apart from the fact that they are largely in prose (which is, it must be admitted, doubtful evidence) they do not always read like Marlowe's writing, and yet there is a pervasive suggestion of his mind at work in them. There is power which makes them painful to read ; although they are grotesque, boisterous and sometimes full of rough, bitter jests, there is nothing comic in them ; they are instinct with a sense of the tragic forces that Marlowe best understood—ignorance, superstition and blind, confused passions. Though many of the jokes may have been written in by another hand there is, I think, a trace of Marlowe's in the confused *non sequitur* by which Cade and Nicke establish Cade's descent from Mortimer. Only a man to whom mental confusion and superstition were bugbears would introduce them so frequently as the groundwork of a bitter tragic episode. The "monstrous simplicity" which bewilders Stafford and the other nobles is understood by Marlowe, and he identifies himself as completely with the benighted mind of Cade as with the amazement of Stafford and Saye. He makes a study of the bitter, unreasoning resentment of the peasant rabble such as Shakespeare never made. Marlowe, the man to whom ignorance was the only sin, reveals in his rabble a more sinister element than Shakespeare ever admitted, but his sympathy also outruns Shakespeare's :

" And more then so, thou hast ... traitorously erected a
grammer schoole, to infect the youth of the realme, and against

the Kings Crowne and dignitie, thou hast built up a paper-mill, nay it wil be said to thy face, that thou kepst men in thy house that daily reades of booke with red letters, and talkes of a Nowne and a Verbe, and such abhominable words as no Christian eare is able to endure it. And besides all that, thou hast appointed certaine Justices of peace in every shire to hang honest men that steale for their living, and because they could not reade, thou hast hung them up : " ¹

The main interest of both these plays is in the group of powerful, dominating and conflicting barons, over whom Henry contrives for a time to hold his ascendancy only because their forces are so evenly balanced that they arrest each other.

York, Warwick, Queen Margaret, Suffolk, Cardinal Beaufort and, in part, Duke Humphrey, sway the balance in *The Contention* and they are supported by others second only in force to themselves : Somerset, Buckingham and Clifford. In *The True Tragedy* many of these appear again (York, Warwick, Margaret, Clifford), but towards the end the ascendancy over all the rest passes to Richard of Gloucester, son of the Duke of York. The house of York is supported by Edward, Clarence and Richard, sons of the Duke, helped by Warwick, Montague and Norfolk ; while on the King's side are Exeter, Northumberland, Westmorland and Clifford. All of these, except Richard of Gloucester, are plain fighting men with more or less powerful instincts for aggression and dominion. All are hot-tempered, impatient of contradiction, and all, except the Queen who, we may feel sure, was no willing exception, prefer to argue with their swords. Some of them—York, Margaret, Warwick—share also the aspiring mind of Tamburlaine, but they have not his poetry. On the other hand, none of them except Richard of Gloucester have any idea of winning dominion by ' pollicie.' Their minds and their actions are full of vigour, like the blows of their heavy two-handed swords, direct and powerful but obvious and incapable of finesse.

In the first play, Marlowe is content to bring part of this group before us, to watch the balance of their strengths and to mark how, gradually and by main force, the Duke of York fights his way up until he is within grasping distance of the

¹ Scene XVIII, ll. 28-36.

crown. Open war between his side and that of Lancaster does not break out until nearly the end of the play, but the fighting spirit flashes out in every scene in which members of the two factions meet, while the gentle, ineffectual Henry wanders pacifically from side to side like a pale mist drifting across a mountain torrent :

York : Tis thought my lord, your grace tooke bribes from France,

And stopt the soldiers of their paie,
By which his Maiefie hath lost all France.

Humph : Is it but thought so, and who are they that thinke so ?
So God helpe me, as I have watcht the night
Ever intending good for England still,
That penie that ever I tooke from France,
Be brought against me at the judgement day.
I never robd the soldiers of their paie,
Many a pound of mine owne propper cost
Have I sent over for the soldiers wants,
Because I would not racke the needie Commons.

• • • • •

Suffolk : Tush my Lord, these be things of no account,
But greater matters are laid unto your charge.
I do arrest thee on high treason here,
And commit thee to my good Lord Cardinall,
Untill such time as thou canst cleare thy selfe.

King : Good unkle, obey to his arrest,
I have no doubt but thou shalt cleare thy selfe,
My conscience tels me thou art innocent.

Humph : Ah gratioues Henry these daies are dangerous,
And would my death might end these miseries,
And staie their moodes for good King Henries sake,
But I am made the Prologue to their plaie,
And thousands more must follow after me,
That dreads not yet their lives destruction.
Suffolkes hatefull tongue blabs his harts malice,
Bewfords firie eyes showes his envious minde,
Buckingham's proud lookes bewraies his cruel thoughts,
And dogged Yorke that levels at the Moone
Whose overweening arme I have held backe.
All you have joynd to betraie me thus :
And you my gratioues Lady and soveraigne mistresse,
Causelesse have laid complaints upon my head
I shall not want false witnesses inough.

That so amongst you, you may have my life.
 The Proverbe no doubt will be well performde,
 A staffe is quickly found to beate a dog.

Car. : Who's within there ? Take in Duke Humphrey.
 And see him garded sure within my house.

Humph. : O ! thus King Henry casts away his crouch,
 Before his legs can beare his bodie up,
 And puts his watchfull shepheard from his side,
 Whilst wolves stand snarring who shall bite him first,
 Farwell my soveraigne, long maist thou enjoy,
 Thy fathers happie daies free from annoy.

(*Exit Humphrey, with the Cardinal's Men.*)

King : My Lords what to your wisdoms shall seem best,
 Do and undo as if our selfe were here.

Queen : What wil your highnesse leave the Parliament ?

King : I Margaret. My heart is kild with grieve, . . .
 For who's a Traitor, Gloster, he is none.¹

But the individual figures in this constantly-shifting group of men, though actuated for the most part by similar motives, are drawn with masterly distinctness. York and Warwick are both men who must be supreme ; but York desires the crown for himself and for his heirs ; Warwick is concerned only with placing the crown upon the head of the man he chooses. Duke Humphrey is as obstinate in the possession of power as either of these, but his devotion to the welfare of the State is genuine, and his desire for power grows largely from the habit of power ; his attitude is protective rather than possessive. Cardinal Beaufort and Suffolk are both factious fomenters of the quarrels of the other noblemen without any apparent motive for participation. Yet they are not alike : Beaufort is a pugnacious Churchman whose warlike instincts have been thwarted by his profession : Suffolk a free-lance warrior, a gallant lover and, in part at least, a poet. Queen Margaret, the "she-wolf of France," deserves far better than Lady Macbeth the epithet of "fiend-like Queene." She is purposeful, fearless and implacable,

¹ *The First Part of the Contention of the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, Scene IX, ll. 43-111 *passim*.

concentrating her energies and her desires more narrowly and more irresistibly than any of the others ; her mood is constant and she plays a consistent part of unswerving determination, egging on the barons and only frustrated by the helpless vacillation of the King.

Two characters, however, stand out even from these : Richard, Duke of Gloucester and Henry the Sixth of England. Richard is the only representative in this play of the direct descendants of Machiavelli's *Prince* ; he is the same explicit stage-villain as was Guise, confessing openly to himself the same lust for power, the same unscrupulousness and the same aptitude for treachery. Outwardly he is a gallant supporter of his father's and brother's fortunes, but his mind is busy with plots for the gradual extermination of all of his house that stand between him and the Crown. Part of his vigour, it is true, seems honest enough ; his Machiavellianism is strangely modified, at times almost obliterated, by the instincts of a straightforward fighting man :

“ But in this troublous time, whats to be done :
 Shall we go throw away our coates of steele,
 And clad our bodies in black mourning gownes,
 Numbring our *Auemaries* with our beades
 Or shall we on the helmets of our foes,
 Tell our devotion with revengefull armes ?
 If for the last, saie I, and to it Lords.” ¹

But his interest in the “ politician ” has not deserted Marlowe yet, and, as the second play develops, he lays greater and greater stress upon Richard's ruthless and secret plotting for dominion :

“ Tut I can smile, and murder when I smile,
 I crie content, to that that greeves me most,
 I can adde colours to the Camelion,
 And for a need change shapes with *Protheus*,
 And set the aspiring *Catalin* to schoole.
 Can I doe this, and cannot get the crowne ?
 Tush were it ten times higher, Ile pull it downe.” ²

In the scenes of the play Richard's knowledge of

¹ *The T*

play, Scene V, ll. 127-33.

² Scene XII, ll. 126-32.

himself seems to clarify still more, and his soliloquy in the 25th scene is full of inferences from Machiavelli's doctrine that the Italian had refrained from drawing himself. The body of Henry lies at his feet, and Gloucester, watching the blood soak into the floor, is moved to a kind of sardonic reflection :

" What ? will the aspiring bloud of *Lancaster*
Sinke into the ground, I had thought it would have mounted,

" Downe, downe to hell, and saie I sent thee thither.
I that have neither pittie, love nor feare."

" I had no father, I am like no father,
I have no brothers, I am like no brothers,
And this word *Love* which graybeards tearme divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me, I am my selfe alone." ¹

The doctrine of Machiavelli is reduced to its simplest elements in these few curt phrases. Its disciple shall have "neither pittie, love nor feare." he shall be himself alone. It is Marlowe's final summary and it differs in one detail from the germ of the system as he saw it in the prologue to the *Jew of Malta*. The most fervent and significant line of the Prologue is without counterpart here. Machiavelli's system no longer signifies to Marlowe a war against that 'ignorance' which was the source of all evil. We may argue from this omission that the system of Machiavelli has been made to yield up its secret, only to prove again that "there is no light behind the curtain."

Upon this implicit comment Marlowe's choice of the character of Henry VI for detailed examination throws some light. The pious, well-intentioned king is neither a tactician nor a bully. Had he not had the misfortune to be born the son of Henry V and heir to the still insecure Crown of England he might have spent a benign and gentle life as a parish

¹ *The True Tragedie*, Scene XXV, ll. 50-74 *passim*.

priest, though even then his dreamy piety would have been thrust aside when passions ran high. In obscure private life he might even have had some mollifying effect upon the more tractable minds around him, but his persistent refusal to understand the nature of the world in which he found himself would have kept him always a thing of little regard. In a king, this temperament was fatal. His piety became mere sentimentalism and, with curious irony, was almost always misplaced. His kindly dread of bloodshed caused more blood to be spilt than the most ruthless cruelty could have done. His conscientious endeavours to remain at his post were forced upon him by his position, but though the task was unavoidable, the robustness necessary to carry it out was lacking.

This, I think, is Marlowe's interpretation of the tragedy, and with slow, cumulative effect, he makes it clear. On the edge of a volcanic outburst from Duke Humphrey and the Cardinal, Henry gazes at the climbing falcons and imparts his gentle reflections to an inattentive audience of whose bitter mood he alone is unaware :

" How wonderfull the Lords workes are on earth,
Even in these silly creatures of his hands, . . . " ¹

The scene recalls Duncan's arrival upon the threshold of Macbeth's castle. Black forces surround each king of which he is unaware, not so much from innocence as from wilful ignorance of men's natures. Each, upon the threshold of disaster pauses to utter pious trivialities, pathetic in a setting whose deeper significance he had missed through a refusal to face the fact of evil. As a result, the slender, feebly-rooted faith is powerless when it is confronted with evil from which it can no longer look away. Henry lets Duke Humphrey go to his death with a mournful reiteration that he is convinced of his innocence, and, when York has laid his hold upon the crown, deserts his own followers and signs away his title. " God's Will be done," he says at every adverse turn of his fortunes, and it is vain that his exasperated supporters suggest that that will is sometimes better served by courageous effort than by pious inertia.

Pathetic and futile as he is, the unwilling cause of tragedy

¹ *The Contention*, Scene V, ll. 4-5.

long drawn out, he yet has moments of dignity, when his strange, unworldly habit of mind lifts him above the stronger natures around him. At the death-bed of the guilty Cardinal Beaufort when others are stricken silent by the raving of the dying man, Henry assumes that kingship of the spirit that was more natural to him than the earthly kingship that had been laid upon him by Fate :

“ Lord Cardinall, remember Christ must save thy soule . . .
 Lord Cardinall, if thou diest assured of heavenly blisse,
 Hold up thy hand and make some signe to us. . . .
 Forbeare to judge, good Salsbury, forbeare,
 For God will judge us all.” ¹

And when he has fallen in the eyes of his followers to the lowest depth of degradation, when he has signed away his son’s title to the crown, he replies to Clifford’s long tirade of scorn with a curious revelation of unexpected resources :

“ Full wel hath *Clifford* plaid the Orator,
 Inferring arguments of mighty force.
 But tell me, didst thou never yet heare tell,
 That things evill got had ever bad successe,
 And happie ever was it for that sonne,
 Whose father for his hoording went to hell.
 I leave my sonne my vertuous deedes behind,
 And would my father had left me no more,
 For all the rest is held at such a rate,
 As askes a thousand times more care to keepe,
 Than maie the present profit countervaile.” ²

In these last four plays, Marlowe has been drawn imperceptibly from one problem to another, from a study of intrigue to a study of contemporary statecraft that was based upon it, from questions of statecraft to questions touching the nature of a state, of government and of a king. Gradually, as he progressed along this path, his normal tendency to isolate and exalt a single figure was reduced. In *The Contention* he presents a closely-woven play whose chief characteristic is the balance of the forces it reveals. When, in *The True Tragedy*, a single figure begins to emerge again,

¹ Scene XI *passim*.

² *The True Tragedie*, Scene V, ll. 42-52.

Marlowe has acquired the power of shifting his focus and can at will bring the background figures close to us in Shakespeare's later manner. Moreover, a profound change has come over his mind during this somewhat dull period of experiment and dissatisfaction. When he begins to emerge from it, in *Edward II*, it is clear that his interest centres no longer in the dominating personality, but in its victim. With this discovery are bound up those questions which are more fully answered in the later play and all, on one side, tend to culminate in the question, "What is a king?"—a question which makes this temporary excursion of Marlowe's into the domain of state-craft and history relevant to the earlier and profounder questions of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*.

APPENDIX II

MARLOWE IN THE EYES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

COUNTERFEITS, superstitions, traditional obscurities ; against these spiritual crimes Marlowe did long and grievous battle in his youth, and they became anathema to him. He toiled against their power over his own mind, sometimes, as *Faustus* goes to prove, sinking under the weight of their oppression and of the confusion in which he fought. And when, in the later years, that tenacious effort to disentangle truth from the dead matter which perpetually silts over it was rewarded with clarity of perception, his conclusions were ruthlessly and fearlessly laid down.

Concerning these opinions and conclusions as they appeared to his contemporaries there is a fairly large body of evidence, most of it reported at second-hand, but all bearing the stamp of at least partial truth, and all fitting clearly into that surer and more direct knowledge that can be gained from his writings. The document handed in to the Star Chamber by Baines,¹ the letter of Kyd to Sir John Puckering,² the depositions made at the investigations at Cerne in the May of 1594,³ all tally with this impression ; they all go to suggest a mind alert, robust, logical, and not devoid of a certain grim, sardonic acuteness.

The opinions contained in Baines's document are undoubtedly recorded faithfully, since the informer's life would have been in danger if he had strayed far from the truth in a capital charge, and are not to be passed over hurriedly with averted eyes and a lowered voice. They are of various kinds. The best of them are, as most honest blasphemy is at bottom, the result of highly courageous and logical thought expressed with an indifference to material consequences almost equally courageous. The worst are mere bravado, obvious nonsense.

¹ Harl. MSS. 6848, f. 185-6. Reprinted, F. C. Danchin, *Revue Germanique*, Nov.-Dec., 1913.
² Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 248-9. Reprinted, F. C. Danchin, *Revue Germanique*, Nov.-Dec., 1913.
³ Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 183 *et seq.* Reprinted, F. C. Danchin, *Revue Germanique*, Nov.-Dec., 1913.

belonging to that cheaper order of blasphemy whose sole object is to relieve the speaker's irritation or minister to his amusement by shocking a dull or complacent audience ; no sane man talks about administering the Sacrament in a tobacco pipe in any other spirit than this. But the same independence of traditional associations appears all through, whether he refers in general terms to the relations of Church and State or to the figures held of most significance by the Christian churches. (Marlowe seems to have had a peculiar hatred of Christianity, seeing in it the source of most of the superstitious fear and confusion that paralysed scientific thought and obscured truth.) (He seems also to have been blind to the value of its penetrating humanity, and, that set aside, found little that satisfied his enquiry. The way of scientific thought, of abstract speculation, of the search for exact truth—these, at the period of his fullest development, were undoubtedly his only means of approach to the Spirit who :

" . . . sits on high and never sleeps,
Nor in one place is circumscribable,
But every where fils every Continent
With strange infusion of his sacred vigor."

But the religion of his contemporaries was to him little more than the desecration of this idea by crude and superstitious expression. (Marlowe at the end of his life had for long counted ' religion but a childish toy ' and held ' there is no sin save ignorance. ') To this faith had tended the early years of experiment and confusion ; and in this we find him confirmed at the period of the Baines testimony, in which he is reported to have endeavoured to persuade men ' not to be afeard of bugbeares and hobgoblins,' and to have declared ' That the first beginning of Religion was only to keep men in awe.' He might indeed have said of himself as did Lucretius :

" . . . *Magnis doceo de rebus et artis
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo.*"

(Marlowe was a profoundly religious man, but his God was a spirit and they that worshipped with Marlowe must worship in spirit and in truth.)

Some further light is shed upon Marlowe's opinions by the records of the enquiry concerning Sir Walter Raleigh, his brother Carew and their circle.¹ Though Marlowe is seldom named here (he had, in fact, been dead almost a year when the investigation was made), all that applies to Raleigh and his immediate circle has an obvious bearing upon him, and in the discussions which took place in Raleigh's household Marlowe must, as occasion afforded, have taken a share. Evidence was forthcoming that 'One Hirryott (Hariot) of Sir Walter Rawleigh his howse hath brought the godhedd in question, and the whole course of the Scriptures,'² and that 'William Hussey churchwarden of Gillingham . . . hath harde Sir Walter Rawleigh suspected of Atheisme.'³ Further, 'Sir Walter Rawleigh hath argued . . . touching the being or immortality of the soul'⁴ and 'one Herriott, attendant on Sir Walter Rawleigh hath been convented before the Lords of the Counsell for denying the resurrection of the bodye.'⁵ Perhaps the most interesting part of this report is the evidence given by Ralph Ironside, minister of Winterbor, concerning an argument upon the nature of the soul, between himself and Sir Walter Raleigh at the house of Sir George Trenchard. It is evident, even from so brief a report of the conversation, that the worthy Mr. Ironside was matched with men whose acute unhesitating logic utterly confounded his dogmatic statements. He was reduced more than once to take refuge in a *petitio principii* in which he was triumphantly exposed, until at last Sir Walter, perceiving that nothing was to be gained from such an adversary, brought the discussion to an end with characteristic vigour: "'Yea, but what is this *Ens Entium*?' says Sir Walter. I answered, 'It is God,' and beinge disliked as before, Sir Walter wished that grace might be sayed, 'for that' quoth he 'is better than this disputacon.'"⁶

To this should be added the statement made against Richard Cholmeley, a notorious character and an informer, in which

¹ Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 183 *et seq.* Reproduced by F. C. Danchin, *Revue Germanique*, 1913, p. 578-87.

² Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 184a. See *Revue Germanique* ³ Ib. See *Revue Germanique*.

⁴ Ib., f. 184b. See *Revue Germanique*. ⁵ Ib., 185a. See *Revue Germanique*.

⁶ Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 188b. The only actually blasphemous member of the group seems to have been Allen, the Lieutenant of Portland Castle, and his words have a very different ring from those reported of Raleigh and of Marlowe, sounding rather of the camp and barracks than of abstract or philosophic speculation.

it transpired that he, too, had certain opinions of Marlowe's to report.¹ 'That hee saieth and verely beleeveth that one Marlowe is able to shewe more sounde reasons for Atheisme then any devine in Englande is able to geive to prove devinitie and that Marloe tolde him that hee hath read the Atheist lecture to Sir Walter Rawleigh and others.' What the speech or paper thus loosely referred to as 'The Atheist lecture' can have been we have as yet no means of conjecturing, and it is certainly not safe to assume that it was necessarily an address on atheism. As is obvious from the evidence of these enquiries (to go no further) an 'atheist' was, to the Elizabethan, a man who denied some substantial item of Christian dogma, and there is contained, in Baines's document alone, ten times as much as was needed to brand a man 'atheist' in this sense of the word.

Kyd, writing to Sir John Puckering in 1593, makes yet another contribution to the somewhat discordant chorus of contemporary witnesses; the comment of a man who, though never intimate with Marlowe, was professionally jealous of him and afraid of being identified with him in opinions or habits. After assigning to Marlowe the ownership of the damning documents which had brought him into so grave danger and protesting that Marlowe could never have adapted himself to the virtuous order of the household of Kyd's "Lord" with its due use of the 'forme of devine prayers,' Kyd goes on: ". . . That I shold love or be familer friend with one so irreligious, were verie rare, when Tullie saith '*Digni sunt amicitia quibus in ipsis inest causa cur diligentur*' which neither was in him, for person, quallities or honestie, besides he was intemperate and of a cruel harte. . . ." Kyd, then, saw in him nothing lovable and his only positive comment is upon his intemperance and 'cruel heart.'

The charge of intemperance is interesting in this connection. It was brought against Marlowe again and again after his death, but only in accounts written at some distance from his life, by men who judged rather by rumour than by personal knowledge. (But in the whole range of Marlowe's work, there is a marked absence of intemperance or coarseness in phrase, situation or idea. The roughness which in Ben Jonson, the

¹ Harl. MSS. 6849, f. 190. Baines also declares that Cholmeley was induced to become an atheist through the persuasions of Marlowe.

robustness which in Shakespeare gives width and fullness to the picture of life by the straightforward acceptance of these elements, is lacking in Marlowe, and we find instead that clear, stainless expression which made Drayton exclaim: "His genius was all air and fire!" Its strength and its weakness—strength in its rare clarity and purity, weakness perhaps in a certain inhumanity—both combine to assure us that the crude vices of his age would have disgusted Marlowe, pardonable as they were considered by most of his contemporaries.) But this does not deny the possibility of another kind of intemperance, which may equally have impressed Kyd—the violent expression of positive thought and a domineering mind. Marlowe, who became in the society of Raleigh and Harriott a clear, keen thinker, a man who took his stand upon the ultimate ground to which these speculators had pushed their thought, may well have been, in the society of the dogmatic, the timid, or the conventional, a ruthless condemner of fools. He had not Raleigh's knowledge of men or of the world to temper his judgments, nor would he, had he lived longer, have gained it. At heart he was primarily a searcher for truth, and in comparison with that search neither expedience nor tenderness weighed with him. It may be conjectured without rashness that he did not suffer fools gladly; and many of his contemporaries, such as Greene and Kyd, who were acquainted with him without knowing him, seem to smart resentfully under his indifference, scorn or arrogance. The explanation covers at once Kyd's accusation of intemperance and of a 'cruel heart.' No one who studies Marlowe's writings closely expects to find him always gentle, and Kyd's and Greene's peevish hints throw light upon this not unexpected aspect.

The testimony of Robert Greene is more indirect than Kyd's and admits of various interpretations, but this at least can safely be said: that the force of Marlowe's personality seems to have oppressed Greene throughout his life. Admiration and resentment, the desire to follow, and the desire to expose and satirise, alternate in Greene's mind and writings, until they culminate in the tangle of fear, malice, hysterical exultation and equally hysterical self-condemnation of the denunciatory passage in the *Groatsworth of Wit*. The excitement of Greene seems to have called forth no demonstration from

Marlowe.¹ His indifference and apparent unconsciousness of Greene's existence may well have been the last unpardonable crime to a man already bitter with the sense of his own inferiority. (Before the compact concentration of Marlowe's mind, Greene's—ungirt, unstable, sensitive and far more complex—was helpless.) The history of his relation to Marlowe would make an absorbing study, beginning with the spiteful reference in the Preface to *Perimedes the Blacksmith* (licensed March 29, 1588), passing into a feverish effort to imitate the grand style in *Alphonsus*, and glean something of Marlowe's popularity, into scornful yet still half-admiring parody in *Orlando Furioso*. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* there is less scorn and more independence. Finally, there comes the denunciation of the *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), which shows that the bitterness which had underlain Greene's relations with Marlowe throughout was not dead; that there was in him still, mingled with the various forms of hysteria out of which the passage is woven, a desire to assail, to reach and to pull down a man who had wronged him more deeply by indifference than by professional defeat.

The 'famous gracer of Tragedians' is malignantly identified with Greene himself, in those crimes and follies for which he already knew that he could never be arraigned before a mortal tribunal. "Wonder not . . . that Greene, who hath said with thee, like the foole in his heart, there is no God, should now give glory unto his greatness: . . . why should thy excellent wit, his gift, be so blinded, that thou shouldst give no glory to the giver? . . ." Greene, who probably knew nothing of Marlowe's opinions beyond the widespread rumour of his atheistical leanings and phrases, repeated and misinterpreted by such men as Baines and Cholmeley, was, at best, hardly a competent judge of the kind of 'glory' which a Marlowe or a Raleigh was capable of giving to the God of his independent choice. The word 'blinded' is singularly inept, and would, alone, cast doubt upon the writer's knowledge of that:

" . . . free soule, whose living subject stood
Up to the chin in the Pyrenean flood."

¹ None, that is, beyond the exhortation which Chettle records both him and Shakespeare to have made concerning the ultimately unprinted part of Greene's libel.

He ascribed Marlowe's benighted views to 'pestilent Machiavellian policy,' a thrust potent enough in its appeal to popular sentiment, but wide of the truth in that Marlowe's opinions actually coincided with Machiavelli's only at a few points and for a short time. There was little in common between them except the belief that 'There is no sin save ignorance.' The summary that follows of Machiavellian tactics may indeed refer to this period of Marlowe's career, though it does not sound like the writing of a man who knew what were Marlowe's deepest interests or understood his most representative thought. The picture of the 'brother of this Diabolicall Atheisme' who 'began in craft, lived in feare, and ended in despaire,' may also point to one of the leading Elizabethan diplomatists, but it is doubtful whether, whoever he be, Marlowe was ever his 'Disciple.' If he was the 'disciple' of any men, it was of Raleigh and of Harriot, who were themselves of the family of Socrates, and of the author of the *Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organon*.

Finally, the denunciation of 'that libertie' as 'an infernall bondage' and a 'wilful striving against known truth,' betrays a man who is still the victim of those confused and unanalysed terrors against which Marlowe had striven in *Faustus*, but which were assuredly now only the 'bugbeares' of which he persuaded men not to be afraid. The 'terrors of my Soule,' with which Greene concludes his passage, and the threat 'little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited,' could no longer apply to Marlowe, who knew better how to meet them than Greene could have learned had his life been indefinitely prolonged. Greene's testimony has value mainly as a representative piece of misinterpretation.

With two other men, Walter Raleigh and George Chapman, Marlowe's relations were of a different, and, in the case of Raleigh, of a far more intimate kind. They have left little direct comment upon him, but their own lives and opinions furnish an indirect one. The nature of the common ground between him and Raleigh has already been indicated. The closeness of their relationship is proved by documentary evidence; the closeness of their mental affinity is a theme which would repay long and careful study.

The philosophic work of Raleigh (the short treatises on *The*

Soul and *The Sceptic* and various passages throughout the *History of the World*) indicates qualities closely akin to those revealed in Marlowe's poetry and recorded opinions. There is in both men the combination of penetrating intellect with profound religious instinct. Both appear to have reached similar conclusions, apparently startling to their contemporaries (perhaps even to posterity), but actually the result of clear reasoning in the service of a fearless desire to have nothing but the truth. Some of Marlowe's conclusions, as has been noticed, come to us at secondhand, and these are marked by a certain aggressiveness of expression which is absent from Raleigh's. But if we allow for the distinction between considered philosophic argument and the epigrammatic and aphoristic manner of a brilliant conversationalist, it is clear that the contents of the Baines libel has much in common with *The Sceptic*. In the case of Sir Walter Raleigh's little pamphlet, the method of reasoning is fully revealed and gives to it its chief value. With its steady determination to accept nothing on hearsay, its readiness to cast aside prejudice and tradition, the continual employment of imagination in the service of reason, and the willingness to come to no conclusion, rather than to accept one imperfectly confirmed, it seems very close in spirit to Marlowe's thought, which has for its starting-point the conviction that 'There is no sin save ignorance.' It is pure pleasure to follow Sir Walter Raleigh's argument in this short treatise, such is the clarity and maturity of his judgment and his unerring sense of the essential :

' For why should I presume to prefer my conceit and imagination, in affirming that a thing is thus or thus in its own nature, because it seemeth to me to be so, before the conceit of other living creatures, who may as well think it to be otherwise in its own nature because it appeareth otherwise to them than it doth to me ?

' They are living creatures as well as I : why then should I condemn their conceit and phantasy concerning any thing more than they may mine ? They may be in the truth and I in error, as well as I in truth and they err. If my conceit must be believed before theirs, great reason that it be proved to be truer than theirs ; and this proof must be either by demonstration or without it. Without it none will believe : certainly, if by demonstration, then this demonstration must seem to be true, or not seem to be true. If it seem to be true, then will it be a question, whether it be so

indeed as it seemeth to be ; and to allege that for a certain proof which is uncertain and questionable seemeth absurd.'¹

This indicates a similarity on the negative side of the thought of both Marlowe and Raleigh. Both appear as destructive thinkers mainly engaged in clearing the ground. This probably was the nature also of many of the discussions in the circle of the 'School of Night,' to which both belonged. All the light that could be thrown upon either of them at this time shows them questioning, doubting and waging war (in season and out) against hastily-drawn and ill-supported conclusions. Sir Walter was willing to argue with Ralph Ironside a whole evening touching the nature of God and of the soul, just as he is reported to have done with the Jesuit parsons ; but his arguments as recorded in the first case are all destructive, and when he found his adversary helpless he broke off the discourse, but offered no constructive or positive suggestion himself. Marlowe in the same way, raises questions throughout *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* to which he offers no answer.

In both cases, the presence of urgent and intense religious feeling is implied in this preoccupation with the origin and essence of man's being. Marlowe was cut off before any trace of constructive thought, or any answers to his questions, had made their way into his work. With a mind whose grasp of metaphysical thought was as powerful and as comprehensive as his, the period of destruction and negation would necessarily be a long one ; the process was thorough and went deep. But in the case of Raleigh, though at the period of his friendship with Marlowe his thought also shows only a negative phase, there is much material—the majority, in fact, of his written work—to indicate the later development of positive and constructive thought. Many of his poems, and not a little of his prose reveal a profound though sombre religious belief, the natural outcome in later years of that inquiring spirit which he, in common with Marlowe, had shown in his youth. There is gravity and profundity about some of these poems, a chant-like dignity which gives them a solemnity fitting the later

¹ *The Sceptic.* (Works of Sir Walter Raleigh. Oxford Edition, vol. VIII, p. 551.) The fact that many of the data used in the treatise are erroneous does not affect the use to which Raleigh puts them.

years of a thinker who had been young when *Faustus* expressed some of the passions of the youth of England. Some of them are as keen and penetrating as the poetry of Donne without its paradoxes : Marlowe and Raleigh were both men in whom keenness of intellect was inseparable from clarity and grace of expression. In the same way his later prose reveals, with a mingling of gravity and grace, a solemn sense of the immanent presence of God and the mortality of man. These passages from the tract on *The Soul* could never have been written by Marlowe at the age at which he died, but the type of mind they reveal is very like his and they could well stand as an introduction to a study of his thought :

" Is it not a manifest argument that it (the soul) cometh from God, seeing in all things it resteth not till it come to God ? The mind in searching causes is never quiet till it come to God, and the will never is satisfied with any good till it come to the immortal goodness." ¹

" By this (the understanding) we speak and knit words and sentences together ; by this we learn arts and devise infinite works, and number, and dispute, and foresee, and mount to Heaven. This it is wherein the glory and excellency of man especially standeth . . . this is proper, together with the will, the breath of life, which God breathed into the face of man ; this is the spirit which returneth unto God that gave it." ²

For both Raleigh and Marlowe speculative thought demanded from time to time poetic expression.

There is in all this, and especially in such poems as *The Lie* and the continuation of *Cynthia*, a sententious gravity and depth of colour to which Marlowe never attained, but to which many of the half-bitter, half-humorous moral passages in *Hero and Leander* seem to be approaching. This, moreover, is a quality which is not discernible in Marlowe's earlier poetry and never appears clearly except in his latest fragment. Yet it bears a strong likeness to the grave disillusionment later revealed by Raleigh's poetry and the shrewd smile which plays over it.

There is marked and undeniable kinship between Marlowe

¹ The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh, Oxford Edition, vol. VIII, p. 582.

² *Ib.*, p. 587.

and the man who is alleged to have written, on the night before his death, the uncompromising epigram :

" Cowards may fear to die ; but courage stout
Rather than live in snuff, will be put out."

If there was any mind in Elizabethan England that could command or impress Marlowe's, whose leadership he would have consented to follow, even in part, that mind was Raleigh's. And the darker and graver personality of Raleigh is the only one of his contemporaries that outstrips Marlowe's in originality and independence of spirit. Marlowe, with that sureness of grasp by which he possessed himself of the things he desired, seems to have turned passionately to the exploring of that mind, whose possibilities were still unexhausted at the time of his own death.

Of George Chapman's relations with Marlowe there is less to be said ; the evidence of their connection goes no further than the positive fact that Chapman finished the poem that Marlowe left uncompleted at his death and that he seems to have wished to carry it out as far as possible in the spirit of the original writer, for which he obviously has profound respect.

" Then thou most strangely-intellectuall fire,
That proper to my soule hast power t'inspire
Her burning faculties, and with the wings
Of thy unspheared flame visitst the springs
Of spirits immortall ; Now (as swift as Time
Doth follow Motion) finde th'eternall Clime
Of his free soule, whose living subject stood
Up to the chin in Pyrenean flood,
And drunke to me halfe this Musean storie,
Inscribing it to deathles Memorie :
Confer with it, and make my pledge as deepe,
That neithers draught be consecrate to sleepe.
Tell it how much his late desires I tender,
(If yet it know not) and to light surrender
My soules darke offspring, willing it should die
To loves, to passions, and societie."¹

Chapman's connection with the Walsingham family makes

¹ *Hero and Leander*, Sestyad III, ll. 183-98.

it probable (though not necessarily certain) that he and Marlowe had been much in each other's society, and this probability is borne out by the history of the poem of *Hero and Leander*. A certain degree of intimacy between the Walsinghams and each of the poets is indicated in the prefaces to the two editions of *Hero and Leander*, published in 1598.¹ But there is little kinship of mind to be traced between Marlowe and Chapman. In fact, their position is a little curious, if not paradoxical. Marlowe, who probably ended his university career with a very slight knowledge of the Greek language and hardly any of its literature, had, nevertheless, many of the characteristics of the Greek mind. In the earlier part of his career the confusion due to the driving askew of his energies obscures this quality except at rare intervals; but at the later and more truly representative period when he wrote *Hero and Leander* Marlowe was, in all essentials, in balance of thought, in grace of form, in warmth of emotion, Hellenic. Chapman, on the other hand, who spent his life in the study and service of Greek literature has, paradoxically, hardly any of the qualities that Marlowe reveals so clearly. Indeed, as Swinburne says, 'For all his labours in the field of Greek translation, no poet was ever less of a Greek in style or spirit. . . . He shows, we must admit, only in a few complete or brief paragraphs, the pure and luminous charm of perfect speech proper to a Greek moralist of the elegiac school.'²

It might be conjectured that Chapman, though himself no Greek, was probably the means of bringing Marlowe into contact with the Greek world of which the younger poet was by mental affinity a native. He seems to have been a channel for the transmission of a spirit which he himself imperfectly understood, but to which he was irresistibly attracted throughout his life. The paradox may even be carried further, for it is perhaps in *Hero and Leander*, where he is influenced by Marlowe's conception of the poem, that he approaches most nearly to the spirit of Greek poetry. In spite of the harsher Puritan tone that clashes with the serenity of the two original

¹ Edward Blount's preface to Marlowe's fragment (1598) refers to the affection in which the Walsinghams held the poet. Chapman's preface to the completed poem (1598, published by Linley) lays stress upon his own long connection with Sir Thomas and Lady Walsingham.

² Swinburne: *Essay on George Chapman*. Preface to vol. II of Swinburne's edition of Chapman's works.

cantos, Chapman's description has now and again the dignity, the clearness and the repose of Greek statuary. Chapman, that is, owes to Marlowe the nearest approach that he ever made to the outlook of those Greek poets in contact with whom his life was passed.



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